

Yakima County profile



by Don Meseck, regional labor economist - *updated September 2017*

[Overview](#) / [Geographic facts](#) / [Outlook](#) / [Labor force and unemployment](#) / [Industry employment](#) / [Wages and income](#) / [Population](#) / [Useful links](#)

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 US 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 (cherry, pears, apples, 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 2016, agricultural employers provided 31,361 jobs, or 28.1 percent of total covered employment countywide. Health services provided 15,252 jobs, or 13.7 percent; and local government averaged 13,350 jobs, or 12.0 percent of total employment. Hence, these three industries/sectors, accounted for over half (specifically 53.8 percent) of total covered employment (111,538 jobs) in the County in 2016.

[\(back to top\)](#)

Geographic facts

(Source: *U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts*)

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

[\(back to top\)](#)

Outlook

The Yakima County economy added approximately 1,800 nonfarm jobs between 2015 (81,400 jobs) and 2016 (83,200 jobs), an average annual increase of 2.2 percent. The most recent nonfarm employment data available at the time of report preparation is for July 2017. These data show that, on a monthly basis, Yakima County’s nonfarm employment registered year-over-year increases for the 56-month period from December 2012 through July 2017. However, in ten of the past twelve months, nonfarm growth has been slower countywide than statewide. In fact, if we look at average annual nonfarm employment growth in Yakima County and in Washington State during the past twelve years (2005-2016, inclusive) it is noted that the County has grown at a slower rate than the state in each of these years. The only consolation is that during “bad” economic years (for example during the recession of 2009 and 2010) nonfarm job loss-rates 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 1.9 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 agricultural industry exerts a moderating effect on the local economy.

Between 2015 and 2016, Washington’s labor market netted 96,600 new nonfarm jobs, an average annual increase of 3.1 percent, more robust than Yakima County’s 2.2 percent advance during this timeframe. The state’s economy has posted year-over-year nonfarm employment increases for 82 consecutive months (October 2010 through July 2017). This July, business and government organizations across Washington supplied 3,346,600 nonfarm jobs (not seasonally adjusted) compared to 3,261,400 jobs in July 2016, a 2.6 percent year-over-year employment increase.

Long-term (i.e. ten-year) industry employment projections produced by the Employment Security Department are for a 1.4 percent average annual nonfarm growth rate from 2015-2025 for the four-county South Central WDA (i.e., Kittitas, Klickitat, Skamania and Yakima) and for a 1.5 percent growth rate for Washington state.

[\(back to top\)](#)

Labor force and unemployment

(Source: Employment Security Department)

Current labor force and unemployment statistics are available on the [Labor area summaries page](#).

Unemployment rates in Yakima County were remarkably consistent in the four-year period from 2005 to 2008 (before the recession). Rates ranged from a low of 7.0 percent in 2007 to a high of 7.8 percent in 2005. This was a relatively narrow range. During the recession however, unemployment rates in Yakima County increased to 10.7 percent in 2011 before decreasing annually each year from 2012 through 2016 (when unemployment averaged 8.0 percent).

Between 2015 and 2016 in Yakima County:

- Not seasonally adjusted unemployment rate edged downwards from 8.1 to 8.0 percent, a one-tenth percentage point contraction. Washington state's unemployment rate dipped by two-tenths of a point (from 5.6 percent in 2015 to 5.4 percent in 2016).
- The average number of unemployed actually increased, 9,884 to 10,055, equating to 171 more residents out of work in the county area during 2016 – not a good economic indicator. Fortunately, the civilian labor force (CLF) rose by 4,061, from 121,733 to 125,794 residents, a respectable 3.3 percent increase. In fact, the local CLF grew at a slightly faster clip than Washington's labor force (which expanded by 2.8 percent during 2016). This countywide CLF growth of 4,061 residents (up 3.3 percent) compared with an average annual nonfarm increase of 1,800 jobs (up 2.2 percent) indicates that some residents were drawn back into the labor force during 2016 to work in Yakima County's agricultural sector.

As mentioned earlier, Yakima County's CLF increased 3.3 percent between 2015 (121,733 residents) and 2016 (125,794 residents). The county's labor force has expanded for the past 20 months, growing 3.5 percent between the Julys of 2016 and 2017, from 130,545 to 135,124 residents, equating to 4,579 more residents in the CLF this July. Simultaneously, the number of unemployed residents plummeted 27.0 percent and by 2,425 residents, to 6,549 in July 2017 from 8,974 in July 2016. Yakima County's unemployment rate dropped substantially from 6.9 percent in July 2016 to 4.8 percent this July and the rate has been posting year-over-year declines now for the past ten months (October 2016 through July 2017). The July 2017 unemployment rate for Yakima County is the lowest reading for the month of July since electronic records were implemented in 1990 – 27 years ago.

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 Civilian Labor Force (CLF) expanded by 98,209 residents (a 2.8 percent upturn) from 2015 to 2016. The state's labor force has increased, year over year, for the past 42 months (February 2014 through July 2017). In July 2017, Washington's CLF tallied 3,755,253 residents versus 3,675,259 in July 2016 equating to 79,994 more Washingtonians in the labor force (up 2.2 percent).

[\(back to top\)](#)

Industry employment

(Source: Employment Security Department)

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

The analysis in the first part of this “Industry employment” section is derived primarily from Quarterly Benchmarked (WA-QB) data. One advantage of these data is that the employment information is very current and data are updated monthly using WA_QB employment estimates. However, estimates are nonfarm related (i.e., they do not include agricultural employment figures).

The analysis in the second part of this “Industry employment” section are derived from the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage (QCEW) program, conducted by the Washington State Employment Security Department. 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 Quarterly Benchmarked data:

The National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) announced that the national recession occurred from December 2007 through June 2009. But, the effects of the recession hit Yakima County’s nonfarm labor market heavily in 2009, 2010, and again in 2012. Please note: nonfarm employment data do not count agricultural jobs. Nonfarm figures are derived from Current Employment Statistics (CES) data/estimates (i.e., from CES quarterly benchmarked data, not seasonally adjusted) at the county, state, and national levels. The “pre-recession” peak for nonfarm employment was in 2008 when the local economy provided 79,600 jobs. Then the recession hit and it took seven years, until 2015, for the Yakima County economy to regain (and slightly exceed) this level of employment. In 2015 nonfarm employment averaged 81,400. The “valley” of our local recession here in Yakima County occurred in 2012, when nonfarm employment averaged just 77,500.

An important takeaway: the recent recession hit the local nonfarm market harder than the total covered employment job market. It took seven years (from 2009-2015, inclusive) for the nonfarm economy to regain these lost jobs; but it took only three years (from 2009-2011, inclusive) for total covered employment (which includes agricultural jobs) to bounce back to the pre-recession peak.

Following is a summary of average annual nonfarm job changes since the recent recession:

- In 2009 - Nonfarm employment across Yakima County dropped 1.9 percent (down 1,500 jobs) to an average annual figure of 78,100. Losses were centered in manufacturing (down 900 jobs and 10.3 percent) and in construction (down 600 jobs and 16.4 percent). If there was any

consolation to the dismal performance of the local economy in 2009, it was that the state's nonfarm market fared even worse – falling by 4.4 percent between 2008 and 2009.

- In 2010 – Nonfarm employment countywide ebbed by 0.4 percent (down 300 jobs) to an average annual figure of 77,800. In relative terms, Washington state's economy fared worse as the number of nonfarm jobs declined 0.9 percent between 2009 and 2010.
- In 2011 – Yakima County's labor market rebounded by 0.2 percent (up 200 jobs) to 78,000 jobs in 2011. During 2011 the state's economy began to recover as the number of nonfarm jobs expanded 1.3 percent. This was the first year of economic recovery for Yakima County and for Washington following the recession.
- In 2012 – The local economy slipped backwards 0.6 percent (down 500 jobs) to 77,500. This calendar year was, in reality, the final year of a four-year slump in Yakima County's nonfarm economy. Conversely, Washington's nonfarm economy moved upwards by 1.6 percent between 2011 and 2012.
- In 2013 – The Yakima County nonfarm sector regained its footing by growing 0.9 percent (up 700 jobs) to 78,200. The tempo of job growth improved statewide as well. Washington's economy averaged a 2.2 percent nonfarm job growth rate between 2012 and 2013.
- In 2014 - Local nonfarm payrolls advanced by 1.4 percent (up 1,100 jobs) to 79,200. Approximately 45.5 percent of total nonfarm growth occurred in the construction and food services industries. Once again however, Washington's growth rate outpaced Yakima's. The Evergreen state's economy expanded at a 2.5 percent clip in 2014.
- In 2015 - It took seven years for the Yakima County economy to get back to the 2008 total nonfarm employment peak of 79,600 jobs. But it finally did so in 2015 as nonfarm employment countywide averaged 81,400 jobs, with a growth rate of 2.8 percent (up 2,200 jobs). Industries that had a particularly good year in 2015: construction (up 400 jobs and 11.3 percent), wholesale trade (up 300 jobs and 5.8 percent), retail trade (up 400 jobs and 4.3 percent), food services (up 400 jobs and 8.3 percent) and local government (up 300 jobs and 1.9 percent). How did the state's economy fare during 2015? The short answer is: a little better than Yakima County. Washington's economy averaged a 2.9 percent nonfarm job growth rate between 2014 and 2015.
- In 2016 – The local economy netted 1,800 more nonfarm jobs in 2016 than in 2015, as total nonfarm employment averaged 83,200 (up 2.2 percent). Yakima County industries that added 300 or more jobs during 2016: retail trade (up 400), health care and social assistance (up 400) and leisure and hospitality (up 300). Washington's nonfarm market expanded at a slightly faster 3.1 percent clip in 2016.

Using the most current monthly WA-QB data (for July 2017), Yakima County's employment has registered year-over-year increases for the past 56 consecutive months (December 2012 through July 2016), but job growth rates were less robust than Washington's in 47 of these 56 months. The local nonfarm market provided 83,100 jobs in July 2016 versus 85,900 in July 2017, a 2,800 job and 3.4 percent upturn.

Between 2015 and 2016, Washington's labor market provided 96,600 new nonfarm jobs, an annual average increase of 3.1 percent. In July 2017, businesses and government organizations statewide supplied 3,346,600 nonfarm jobs (not seasonally adjusted), compared to 3,261,400 jobs in July 2016, a 2.6 percent employment increase. The state's economy has posted year over year nonfarm employment increases for the past 82 consecutive months (October 2010 through July 2017).

A generalization about the Yakima County economy, at least for the past dozen years (from 2005 through 2016, inclusive) 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 from 2005 through 2008, inclusive.
- Washington’s nonfarm economy lost jobs more rapidly than Yakima County during the recession in 2009 and 2010.
- In each of the six years since the recession, local nonfarm job growth has lagged the growth pace statewide (i.e., from 2011-2016, inclusive).

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 three 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 annual average Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage (QCEW) data. The most recent average annual employment data available for Yakima County are for 2016 and these data show:

The top five Yakima County sectors in 2016 in terms of employment were:

Sector	Number of jobs	Share of employment
1. Agriculture, forestry and fishing	31,361	28.1%
2. Health services	15,252	13.7%
3. Local government	13,350	12.0%
4. Retail trade	10,732	9.6%
5. Manufacturing	8,369	7.5%
All other industries	32,474	29.1%
Total covered payrolls	111,538	100%

More than seventy percent (70.9 percent, to be exact) of all jobs in Yakima County were in five, two-digit NAICS industries or sectors (i.e., 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 2016 with the sectors that produced the highest payrolls follows:

- Agriculture provided 28.1 percent of all jobs countywide, but supplied only 21.8 percent of total wage income. Why? Many agricultural jobs are seasonal.
- Conversely, health services tallied 13.7 percent of total covered employment in 2016 but accounted for 16.2 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 14.3 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 local government.
- The local retail trade sector accounted for nearly one in ten jobs countywide, but provided only 7.6 percent of total wage income.
- Conversely, manufacturing supplied only 7.5 percent of all jobs in Yakima County but 9.2 percent of total wages/payroll. Almost one in every ten dollars of wage income earned

countywide during 2016 was earned at a manufacturing firm. (Note: the manufacturing sector includes the “food processing” subsector.)

If one analyzes employment changes in Yakima County over the past 13 years (2004-2016, inclusive) using Washington State Employment Security Department’s annual average Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage (QCEW) data the following employment trends emerge:

In Yakima County, total covered employment increased from 93,988 in 2004 to 111,538 in 2016, a 17,550 job and 18.7 percent expansion during this twelve-year period. Of the 22 NAICS sectors mentioned earlier, there were five major sectors/industries that accounted for 65.4 percent of all jobs countywide in 2004. The same “Top Five” accounted for 70.9 percent of all covered employment countywide twelve years later, in 2016. Hence, the Yakima County economy was not a tremendously diverse economy in 2004 and QCEW employment data indicate it has become somewhat less diverse by 2016. In 2016; agriculture provided 28.1 percent, health services 13.7 percent, local government 12.0 percent, retail trade 9.6 percent and manufacturing 7.5 percent of total covered employment countywide. In 2004; agriculture provided 21.3 percent, local government 13.0 percent, health services 11.6 percent, manufacturing 9.8 percent and retail trade 9.7 percent of total covered employment. Hence, there was some repositioning within the “Top Five” rankings of job-providing sectors during this twelve-year period (i.e., from 2004-2016), as follows:

- Employment in agriculture, forestry and fishing (where the vast majority are in agriculture) jumped 56.4 percent (from 20,057 jobs in 2004 to 31,361 in 2016) as agriculture strengthened its “Number One” position during this twelve-year period (or 13 years, inclusive). The agricultural sector will likely continue to expand in the near future, according to an article entitled “New Industry Coming to Sunnyside Will Bring 200 New Jobs” published in the New Vision website on 19 June 2017 (see <http://www.chooseyakimavalley.com/2017/06/19/new-industry-coming-to-sunnyside-will-bring-200-new-jobs/>). The article states: “Ostrom Mushroom Farms, located in Olympia, WA, and the Port of Sunnyside have announced that the company will be opening a new farm in Sunnyside. . . Ostrom has been growing mushrooms since 1928 and employs 300 growers, pickers, and packers at their Olympia farm. The mushrooms are handpicked daily, refrigerated, and shipped fresh to consumers all over the Pacific Northwest, Alaska, and Hawaii. . . When in full production, Ostrom will create over 200 new jobs and be one of the largest employers in the County.” Certainly this is good economic news for the local agricultural industry.
- Local government registered a 9.3 percent employment upturn (from 12,209 jobs in 2004 to 13,350 in 2016) but it moved downwards in the “Top Five” ranking; from the second largest industry employment-wise in 2004 to the “Number Three” position by 2016.
- Health services registered a strong 39.7 percent expansion (from 10,914 jobs in 2004 to 15,252 in 2016) improving its ranking from the third largest industry countywide in 2004 to the “Number Two” position by 2016.
- Manufacturing employment in Yakima County decreased 8.8 percent (from 9,181 jobs in 2004 to 8,369 in 2016) and this sector/industry slipped from the “Number Four” to the “Number Five” position in the “Top Five” rankings between 2004 and 2016. Why? Durable goods manufacturing took some hits in the decade from 2000-2010. Layoffs were particularly severe in transportation equipment manufacturing (i.e., closures at Chinook Trailwagons and Western RV) and in lumber and wood products (i.e. the Yakima Resources closure). Nondurable goods manufacturing was not immune to layoffs either as food processing/manufacturing shed jobs when DelMonte closed their asparagus cannery in Toppenish. However, annual QCEW employment data show that although Yakima County’s manufacturers “troughed” at 7,470 jobs

in 2010, this subsector has generally been on an uptrend since then. Specifically, manufacturing employment rose to 7,869 in 2011, ebbed to 7,813 in 2012, expanded to 8,222 in 2014, virtually stalled at 8,216 jobs in 2014 before advancing to 8,279 jobs in 2015 and to 8,369 in 2016. These data indicate a slow, but not steady, resurgence in Yakima County's manufacturing employment since 2010. Following are examples of some manufacturing subsectors that have shown promise, and/or stability, in recent years:

- Food manufacturing (NAICS 311) provides more jobs than any other manufacturing subsector in Yakima County. It provided 2,874 jobs across Yakima County in 2010 (which was the “trough” of the recent recession in terms of its effect on total covered employment). The number of food manufacturing jobs accelerated to 3,129 in 2011 before settling in the 3,000-job range from 2012 through 2016.
- Plastics and rubber product manufacturing (NAICS 326) has escalated slowly and steadily from 1,102 jobs in 2009 to 1,391 in 2016, a 289 job and 26.2 percent upturn. Clearly this is a local subsector that has found a “niche” here in the Yakima Valley. This upturn from calendar year 2009 (674 jobs) to 2016 (905 jobs) equates to 18 more paper manufacturing jobs (up 4.5 percent) in this five-year period.
- In 2009 the number of fabricated metal product manufacturing (NAICS 332) jobs bottomed out at 674, but this subsector has generally been in a growth mode ever since. By 2016 it provided 905 positions, equating to 231 additional jobs, a strong 34.3 percent employment rise. Clearly, fabricated metal product manufacturing has been faring well here in Yakima County during this seven-year period (2009 through 2016).
- Machinery manufacturing (NAICS 333) progressed from 473 jobs in 2010, to 502, in 2011, to 539 in 2012, to 573 in 2013, stabilized at 602 jobs in 2014 and 2015, and then rose to 617 in 2016. Hence, from 2010 through 2016 this subsector tallied 144 more jobs, a healthy 30.4 percent employment gain during this six-year period. This subsector will likely continue to grow in 2017, according to a 20 June 2017 article entitled “Pro West Mechanical Expands, Plans to Add 40 New Employees” posted to the New Vision website (see <http://www.chooseyakimavalley.com/2017/06/20/pro-west-mechanical-expands-plans-to-add-40-new-employees/>). The article states, “The company was diversifying by adding new services while growing their industrial spray painting and finishing business – and this was in addition to expanding their original metal fabrication, manufacturing, and assembly services.”
- Retail trade increased employment by 17.4 percent (from 9,145 jobs in 2004 to 10,732 in 2016) raising its ranking from the fifth-largest job providing industry/sector countywide in 2004 to the “Number Four” position by 2016.

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

Industry employment by age and gender

(Source: The Local Employment Dynamics)

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. Some highlights:

In 2016, women held 48.0 percent of the jobs in Yakima County. However, there were substantial differences in gender by industry.

- Male-dominated industries included utilities (84.0 percent), construction (83.3 percent) and mining (79.7 percent).
- Female-dominated industries included healthcare and social assistance (78.8 percent), finance and insurance (71.2 percent) and educational services (68.5 percent).

There were differences in 2016 between Yakima County and Washington state in the percentages of workers by age class:

- Only 20.8 percent of workers in Yakima County in all industries were in the 25-34 years of age group versus 22.9 percent statewide.
- 8.2 percent of workers in Yakima County in all industries were 65-99 years of age versus only 5.5 percent statewide.

[\(back to top\)](#)

Wages and income

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

The total covered payroll in 2016 in Yakima County was approximately \$4.09 billion. The average annual wage was \$36,648 or 62.0 percent of the state average of \$59,073.

The top five Yakima County industries in 2016 in terms of payrolls were:

Sector	Payroll	Share of payrolls
1. Agriculture, forestry and fishing	\$892,087,169	21.8%
2. Health services	\$661,025,674	16.2%
3. Local government	\$583,924,263	14.3%
4. Manufacturing	\$374,505,886	9.2%
5. Retail trade	\$310,729,591	7.6%
All other industries	\$1,265,400,263	31.0%
Total covered payrolls	\$4,087,672,846	100%

As shown in the table above, QCEW data showed that Yakima County’s workers received approximately \$4.09 billion in wages in calendar year 2016. Nearly 70 percent of this wage income was earned in five, two-digit NAICS industries or sectors (i.e., agriculture, health services, local government, manufacturing and retail trade). Agriculture was the largest provider of wages and jobs in the county in 2016, supplying 21.8 percent of total earned wage income and accounting for 28.1 percent of all jobs. The disparity in percentages between wages and employment is primarily due to the fact that there is 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 2016 in terms of wages, providing \$661.0 million in payroll and 16.2 percent of total earned wage income while accounting for 13.7 percent of total covered employment, indicating that, in aggregate, this is a relatively good-paying industry.

Annual average wages in Yakima County 2016 were highest in utilities (\$86,303) and in management of companies and enterprises (\$68,057). Conversely, annual average wages were lowest in accommodation and food services (\$16,493) and in arts, entertainment and recreation (\$20,542).

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 in Yakima County in 2015 was \$38,527 compared to the state at \$51,898 and the nation at \$48,112.

Median household income from 2011 through 2015 (in 2015 dollars) was \$44,749 in Yakima County, 73.3 percent of the state’s median household income (\$61,062) and 83.0 percent of the nation’s (\$53,889) according to Census QuickFacts.

Yakima County’s poverty rate in 2014 was considerably higher (19.1 percent) than the state’s (12.2 percent) and the nation’s (13.5 percent) poverty rates according to Census QuickFacts. The state and national rates are not directly comparable to the county rate because they each use different data sources.

[\(back to top\)](#)

Population

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Office of Financial Management)

During the last ten years, Yakima County had an annual average population growth rate of about 0.7 percent, which was slower than Washington’s 1.1 percent growth pace.

Yakima County’s population was estimated at 249,636 in 2016, up 2.6 percent from the 243,237 county residents in 2010. Washington’s state’s population grew 8.4 percent, to 7,288,000 residents in 2016 from 6,724,545 in 2010. Hence the local population grew only about one-third as fast as did the state’s population during the past six years.

During the next ten years (2016 through 2026) Yakima County’s population is estimated to grow annually by 0.9 percent, close to the state’s projected yearly growth rate of 1.0 percent.

Population facts

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts)

	Yakima County	Washington state
Population 2016	249,636	7,288,000
Population 2010	243,231	6,724,540
Percent change, 2010 to 2016	2.6%	8.4%

Age, gender and ethnicity

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts)

Compared with the state, Yakima County’s 2016 population has substantially more children under 5 years old and more youth under 18 years old. Approximately 29.9 percent of the county’s residents are under 18 years old compared to 22.4 percent statewide. The county’s population age 65 or older totals 13.4 percent compared to 14.8 percent in Washington state.

As of 1 April 2016, Yakima County has a higher percentage of Latino and Hispanic residents than the state and nation. Specifically, Yakima County’s Hispanic or Latino population makes up 48.8 percent of its population, much higher than Washington state (12.4 percent). Yakima County’s American Indian/Native Alaskan population was 6.4 percent compared to 1.9 percent in the state, reflecting the presence of the Yakama Nation.

Demographics

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts)

	Yakima County	Washington state
Population by age, 2016		
Under 5 years old	8.3%	6.2%
Under 18 years old	29.9%	22.4%
65 years and older	13.4%	14.8%
Females, 2016	50.0%	50.0%
Race/ethnicity, 2016		
White, not Hispanic or Latino	44.8%	69.5%
Black	1.5%	4.1%
American Indian, Alaskan Native	6.4%	1.9%
Asian, Native Hawaiian, other Pacific Islander	1.8%	9.4%
Hispanic or Latino, any race	48.8%	12.4%

Educational attainment

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts)

According to the American Community Survey, during the period 2011 to 2015, 71.9 percent of Yakima County’s population 25 years and older were high school graduates or higher, considerably lower than the statewide average of 90.4 percent and the national average of 86.7 percent.

Yakima County also had a lower percentage of adults with a bachelor’s degree or higher (15.7 percent) compared to the state at 32.9 percent and the nation at 29.8 percent during the same time period.

[\(back to top\)](#)

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](#)
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[\(back to top\)](#)