

2022
POPULATION DATA OVERVIEW
FOR EHF SERVICE REGION





HEALTH IS A FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT

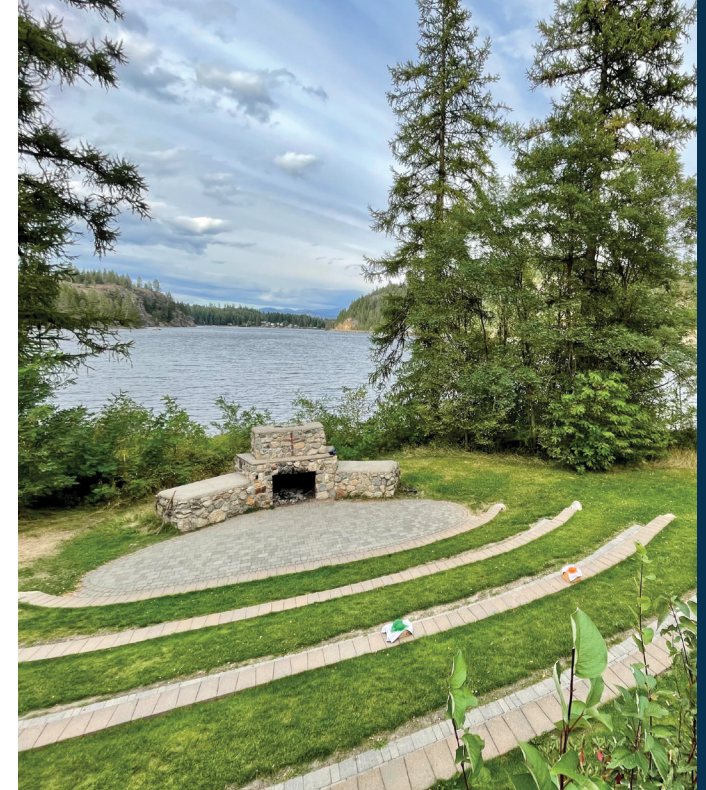
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report offers a view into how the seven counties and three reservation areas in Empire Health Foundation's service region have fared historically and current day.

The profiles that follow for Adams, Ferry, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, and Whitman counties highlight what the region looks like now and the forces that have shaped it to this point. The result is a window into the health and socio-economic outlook of EHF's service area. It's meant to prompt thinking about how resources (both EHF's and external) have been allocated and will be allocated in the future.

THIS REPORT CONTAINS:

1. Key takeaways
2. Highlights of health and socio-economic data
3. A note about data
4. Snapshots of seven counties and three reservations
5. Explanations of and links to data sources and further reading



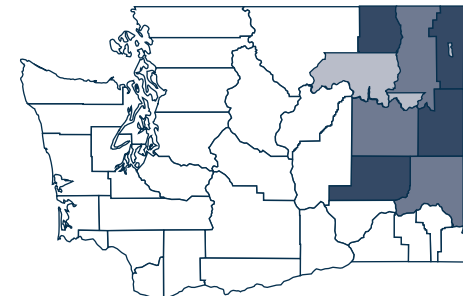
KEY TAKEAWAYS

TAKEAWAY 1: Eastern Washington is not a monolith

The seven counties in EHF's service area, and the 20 in eastern Washington, are often seen for one thing: agriculture. But the counties vary greatly in many demographics and economic drivers. Adams, Lincoln, and Whitman are neighbors with significant crop yields. Adams has the highest Hispanic population in the state at nearly 64%, and a much more diversified menu of labor-intensive crops. By contrast, Lincoln is mostly all wheat and nearly 94% white. Whitman is a wheat and grain powerhouse, topping Lincoln in total output. It also has a large state university that completely changes its data. In other words: the nuances of what takes place in a county are important to interpreting the data.

TAKEAWAY 2: Counties are simultaneously similar and different

Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille counties are peers in more than geography. They share many demographic and economic characteristics like the presence of separate Native American reservations and historically high unemployment rates. They also have similarly high measures of poor health outcomes. But there are key differences between these three peer counties that mean they can't be viewed simplistically as one block of land and people. Spokane County is by far the most populated in the region and has good ratios of medical providers to residents compared to other counties. However, outlying areas of the county look much more like the rural and health-challenged parts of EHF's service area.

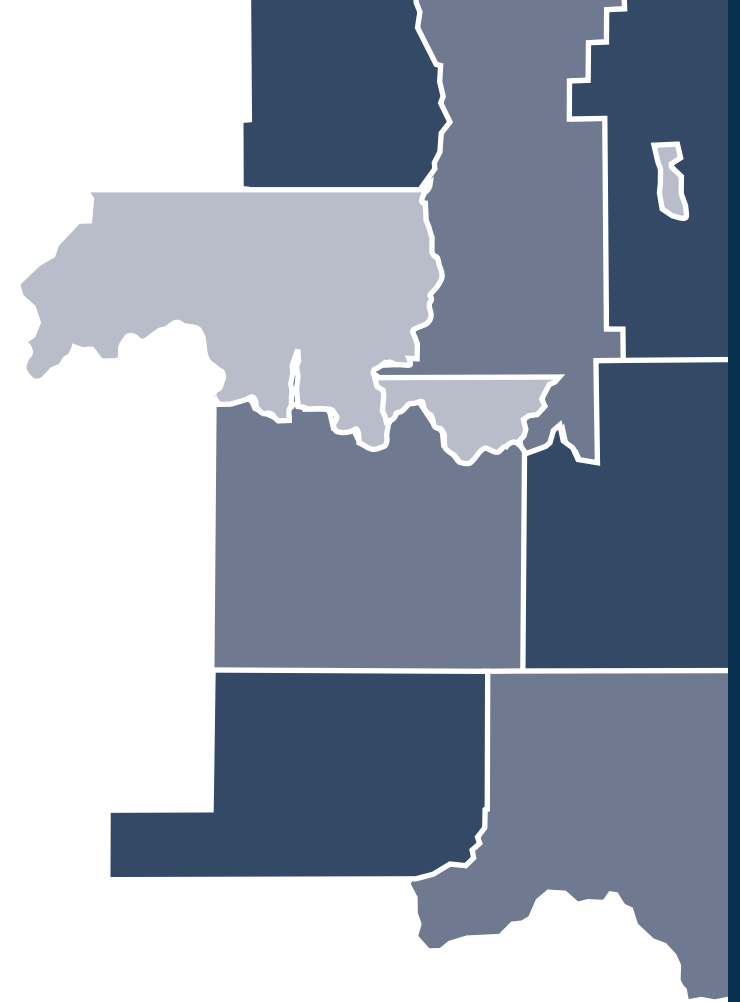


TAKEAWAY 3: Health statistics don't tell the whole story

Overall, Ferry County ranks the worst in the state for health outcomes and factors. Stevens and Pend Oreille counties have similar numbers. They are all challenged by health factors like higher-than-state-average obesity and smoking rates. They all have stubbornly high unemployment rates tied to their historical employment industries. All are heavily influenced by Native American tribes. For example, Ferry has by far the state's highest Native American population – nearly 17%. The state overall is about 2% Native American alone. Across the region, median household incomes are well below the state as a whole, but there are wide differences between counties and populations within those counties. For example, the median household income of Native American residents in Stevens County, largely on the reservation of the Spokane Tribe, is more than \$20,000 less than the county overall.

TAKEAWAY 4: Better and disaggregated data is necessary

Between the 2020 census, American Community Survey, County Health Rankings, Data USA, and several other sources, there are numerous data points and sets represented here. Many more weren't highlighted. One theme rings true: Getting reliable data for separate groups within counties is not only difficult, but sometimes impossible depending on the measure. Similarly, data specific to tribes and their reservation areas is difficult to find, particularly data that corresponds to similar measures available for states and counties. This represents an opportunity for EHF, its partners, researchers, and governments to better collaborate and think about ways to collect and report information about the people who live and work in the Inland Northwest.



EHF SERVICE AREA HIGHLIGHTS

Snapshots of the EHF service area in this report utilize data from several sources, explanations of and links to which are in this report's final section. Following are definitions of key data points in county profiles, with selected highlights.

ALICE INCOME ASSESSMENT:

A measure of a population defined as being "Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed." It encompasses people who earn above the federal poverty level but can't afford basic essentials. People in this category often earn too much for government assistance and have little or no room for emergency expenses. Overall, 23% of Washington residents are in the ALICE category.

Two counties, Lincoln and Spokane, are slightly below the state average, at 22%. Adams has the highest ALICE rate in the service area, at 29%. Adams also has one of the highest rates of students eligible for free and reduced lunch, at 77%. Overall in Washington, 43% of students are eligible.

CHILDHOOD POVERTY RATE:

Taken from the County Health Rankings using 2019 data, this measures the percent of residents under age 18 who are at or below the federal poverty level. Washington state's average is 12%.

Lincoln, Spokane, and Whitman counties have childhood poverty rates of 14%, two percentage points above the state rate. All other counties are 22% or above. Pend Oreille's rate of 27% is the highest in Washington.

Adams County

ALICE
Rate: **29%**

*Highest in EHF Service Area.

INCOME INEQUALITY:

Measured by County Health Rankings using 2015-2019 data, this number is the ratio of household income at the 80th percentile to income at the 20th percentile. The higher the number, the more income inequality exists in the area. Washington state's overall number is 4.4.

Five counties are clustered around the overall state rate of 4.4. Two counties are notable for their high level above the state rate. Ferry stands out with 5.8. Whitman's level of 6.7 is the highest in the state, suggesting a wide difference between top income earners (largely from Washington State University) and lower earners (students, service industry, agricultural industry).

Pend Oreille

Childhood Poverty: **27%**

*Highest in WA State.

Ferry

Health Ranking: **39th of 39 WA Counties**

SEVERE HOUSING PROBLEMS:

The County Health Rankings model, using 2013-2017 data, defines this as: "Percentage of households with at least 1 of 4 housing problems: overcrowding, high housing costs, lack of kitchen facilities, or lack of plumbing facilities." Washington state's average is 17%.

Several counties in the EHF service area are below the state average. Lincoln is the lowest at 11%. Adams and Whitman are six percentage points higher, at 23%, the highest in Washington. NOTE: Two points are important. First, this does not fully measure housing supply issues. Second, the timeframe of data available does not capture the past three years of housing cost increases, which are particularly evident in Spokane County.

HEALTH OUTCOMES AND FACTORS:

While related, outcomes and factors are recorded separately. Outcomes are measures such as premature death, overall poor health, and low birthweight. Factors and behaviors, such as smoking rate, obesity, teen births, and availability of physicians and mental health providers, help us understand outcomes.

EHF's service region includes counties on both ends of the spectrum and in the middle. Whitman ranks among the best for both outcomes and factors, heavily influenced by Washington State University in Pullman. Lincoln ranks about the middle for both. Three counties – Adams, Ferry, Pend Oreille – rank near or at the bottom of all counties in Washington. Ferry ranks last (39 of 39) in both outcomes and factors.

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME:

As measured by the County Health Rankings and Data USA, using 2019 U.S. Census Bureau data from the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates. This measures the level of income where half of households in an area earn more and half of households earn less. It is less subject to volatility from significant outliers on either end. Washington state median is \$78,700.

All counties in the EHF service area are well below the state median income, highlighting a divide in cost of living and income opportunities between western and eastern Washington. Notable differences exist within EHF’s service area, too. Pend Oreille County has a median income of more than \$50,000, but the median income on the reservation of the Kalispel Tribe, surrounded by the county, is \$12,000 less. The difference is more pronounced in Stevens County, with a median income more than \$52,000. The median income for residents on the reservation of the Spokane Tribe, within Stevens County, is at least \$22,000 less than the wider county.

Median Income	
Stevens County Residents:	\$55K
Spokane Tribe Residents:	\$30K

POOR OR FAIR HEALTH:

Measured in the County Health Rankings using 2018 data, based on the percentage of adults in the county reporting “poor” or “fair” health. Washington’s average is 15%.

All counties in EHF’s service area are above the overall state rate, though Lincoln and Spokane are higher by only one percentage point. Adams stands out as far above, with 29% of residents reporting “poor” or “fair” health, the highest in Washington.

PREMATURE DEATH:

Captured in the County Health Rankings using 2017-2019 data, this measures the total number of years of potential life lost before age 75 per 100,000 population. Washington state’s average is 5,600.

Whitman’s number of 4,400 makes it the only county in the EHF service area lower than the state number. Several are noticeably higher, such as Pend Oreille at 8,700. Ferry stands out at double the state number for premature death years, with 11,200. It also has the state’s highest percentage of adult tobacco users and highest unemployment rate. Ferry’s historic economic drivers of mining and timber have seen steep declines in recent decades. Compared to other counties in the service area and state, Ferry’s labor force has not rebounded in the 10-year period following the Great Recession.

A NOTE ON DATA

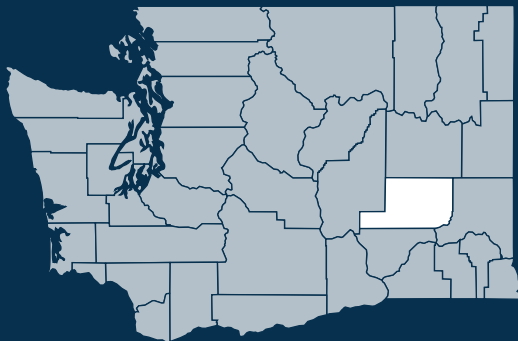
Collecting and interpreting data is challenging. We depend on it to make informed decisions, not just in our work, but as individuals navigating the world. In presenting these profiles and analysis of EHF's service region, we do so with a caveat: Data sources vary and don't all represent the same collection techniques. Nor are the timeframes the data represent all the same.

Missing from this report are full, separate snapshots of the three sovereign, federally recognized Native American reservation areas that EHF serves: the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, the Spokane Tribe of Indians, and the Kalispel Tribe of Indians. Data sources don't easily and readily capture and disaggregate data for separate tribes' reservations and members.

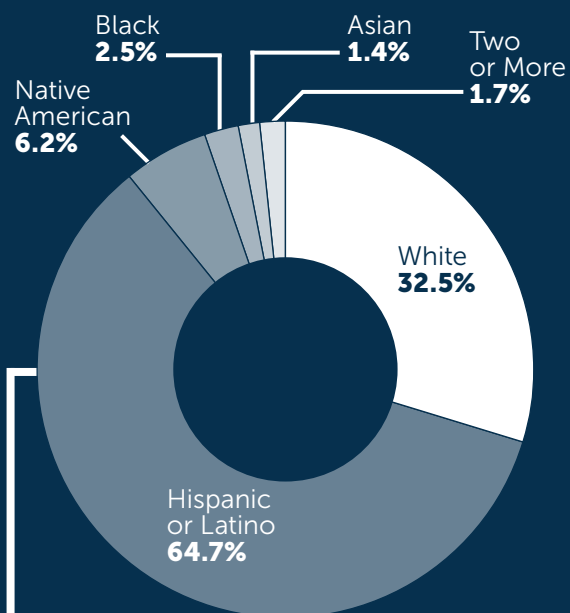
Therefore, the county profiles that correspond closest with a tribal area – Ferry County for Colville Tribes; Stevens County for Spokane Tribe; Pend Oreille County for Kalispel Tribe – try to capture some narrative about the tribal government and its people. A separate snapshot with data about the three reservations and tribal members is also included.

These snapshots and the associated analysis and narrative are all ways of understanding the region and, most important, the residents who live and work here. It is through these snapshots that we aim to help EHF's leaders make informed decisions about not only where and how to engage with the organization's financial resources, but to think broadly and boldly about its future.

In short, this report shows a glimpse of what we know is true about the Inland Northwest. It also reminds that there is a tremendous amount still to learn.



Median Income **\$53,500**



Total Pop. **21,000**

ADAMS COUNTY

Adams County lands in the middle of counties in EHF's service region.

Three are considerably smaller in population, while two are about twice its size. (Spokane County, by far the largest, is an outlier.) Adams County is notable as having not only the largest Hispanic population in EHF's service region, but the largest in the state at nearly 65%. However, it also has the highest poverty rate (25.6%) among the seven counties. Adams County's relatively high ALICE rate of 29% is notable as the highest of the seven counties.

QUICK LOOK

- **Annual Growth Projection:** 1.13%
- **Median Age:** 27.9
- **Median Household Income:** *White:* \$55,100
Hispanic/Latino: \$43,200 *Native American:* \$27,500
Asian: \$79,500 *Black:* ND



HEALTH OUTCOMES & FACTORS

Outcomes:

Among the least healthy counties in the state
(31 of 39)

Factors:

Among the least healthy counties in the state
(35 of 39)

WHAT STANDS OUT

- **Physical & mental health rating:** Poor
- **Uninsured population:**
County: 13% WA State: 7%
- **Shortage of primary care physicians:**
1980 : 1
- **Students eligible for free or reduced lunch:**
County: 77% WA State: 43%
- **Severe housing problems:**
County: 23%* WA State: 17%
- **Children in poverty:** *All County: 22% White: 6%
Hispanic/Latino: 43% Native American: 73%
Asian: ND Black: 44%*

*Highest in WA State

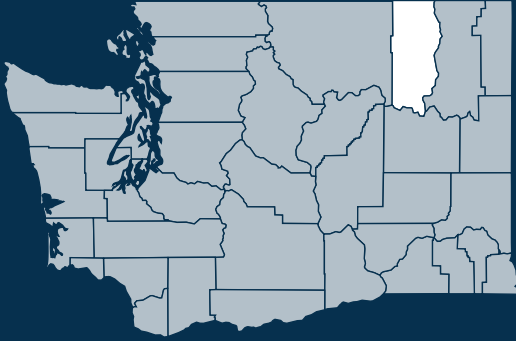
EMPLOYMENT LOOK

Like many counties in eastern Washington, a primary economic driver and employment sector is agriculture, with major employers such as JR Simplot, a leading nationwide producer of potato products. Other top employers are in health care (Othello Community Hospital), government services (Adams County), and retail (Walmart). The strong agricultural sector, with a diversified crop presence, helped Adams County during the Great Recession and the 10-year recovery. In 2019, nearly 64% of employment was in three areas: agriculture, government, and manufacturing, which includes food processing.¹

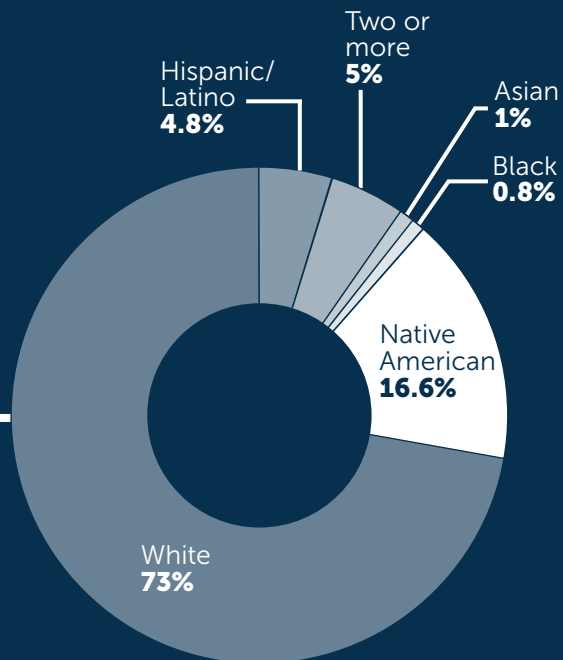
TAKEAWAY

Eastern Washington is largely an agricultural region. But its counties are not a monolith. Adams County stands out in two ways. First, the types of crops it produces are more labor intensive compared to neighboring counties in EHF's service area, requiring more employees to produce and process. Many of these workers come through generational migration from Latin American countries, hence the high Hispanic population compared to nearby wheat-heavy counties like Lincoln and Whitman. This also means relatively more people (primarily from Mexico) working on H2-A visas. Historically, EHF's programs have not focused on addressing health and socio-economic needs that may be present in these communities.

¹ Washington State Employment Security Department, 2020.
See esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/county-profiles/adams



Median Income **\$47,500**



Total Pop. **7,200**

FERRY COUNTY

Ferry County has the smallest population in EHF's service region.

It's the only one to have lost population between the 2010 and 2020 censuses. The county's relatively high pre-pandemic unemployment rate of 11.3% (similar to its peer northeastern Washington counties of Stevens and Pend Oreille) is consistently the highest in the state, well above other counties in the 10-year recovery from the Great Recession. Important in any overview is that nearly half of the county falls within the reservation of the Colville Confederated Tribes. According to the 2020 census, more than 16% of residents identify as Native American alone, the highest of any Washington county. Additionally, much of the county's non-reservation land is federally owned national forest, which limits private enterprise and tax collection. Less than 18% of the county's land is privately owned. With about 3.4 people per square mile, it is Washington's second least densely populated county.

QUICK LOOK

- **Annual Growth Projection:** 0.18%
- **Median Age:** 50.3
- **Median Household Income:** *White:* \$44,000 *Hispanic/Latino:* ND *Native American:* \$34,000 *Asian:* ND *Black:* ND

¹The December 2021 unemployment rate was 7%, still the highest in Washington.

²Washington State Employment Security Department, 2020. See esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/county-profiles/ferry



HEALTH OUTCOMES & FACTORS

Outcomes:

The least healthy county in the state
(39 of 39)

Factors:

The least healthy county in the state
(39 of 39)

WHAT STANDS OUT

- **Physical & mental health rating:** poor
- **Uninsured population:**
County: 11% *WA State:* 7%
- **Adult tobacco smoking rate:**
County:* 22% *WA State:* 12%
- **Students eligible for free or reduced lunch:**
County: 57% *WA State:* 43%
- **Years of premature death:**
County:* 11,200 *WA State:* 5,600
- **Motor vehicle crash deaths per 100K:**
County:* 34 *WA State:* 8
- **Children in poverty:** *All County:* 22% *White:* 6%
Hispanic/Latino: 43% *Native American:* 73%
Asian: ND *Black:* 44%

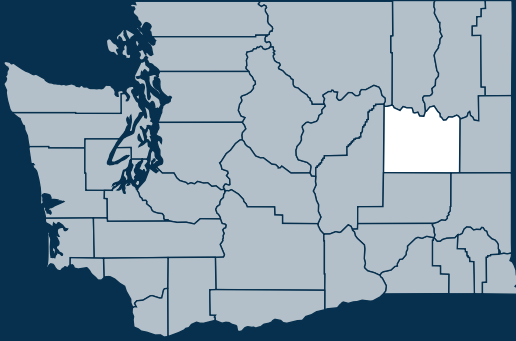
*Highest in WA State.

EMPLOYMENT LOOK

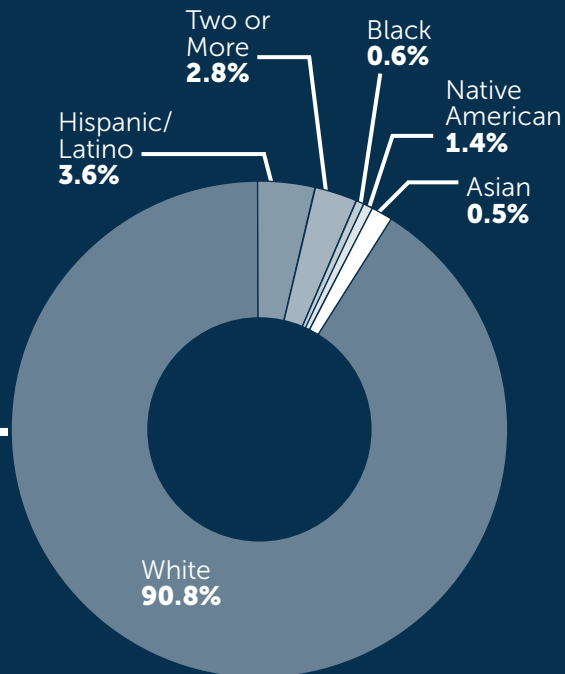
Ferry County's historic primary economic drivers, gold mining and timber, have seen steep declines in recent decades. The county's largest employer, a gold mine, closed in 2018, exacerbating an already difficult labor market that saw a 17.5% unemployment rate at the height of the Great Recession in 2010. There are nearly 1,800 non-farm jobs in Ferry County, but according to the state Employment Security Department: "A large number of the employed residents work in jobs or for firms located outside the county." Like many smaller counties, governments at the federal, state, and county levels are leading employers. Employment with the Colville Tribes also accounts for a considerable number of jobs.

TAKEAWAY

Though very rural and relatively sparsely populated, Ferry stands out for having far less agricultural employment than other counties in eastern Washington. Like its peer counties (Stevens, Pend Oreille, Okanogan), Ferry has historical ties to economic industries – primarily mining and timber – that have seen massive shifts in employment over the past 30-plus years. These declining employment trends coincide with negative health outcomes. Wildfires have also greatly affected residents in the past 10 years, hurting not only prospects for timber extraction, but reducing quality of life and presenting additional health concerns for smoke and threats to housing stability.



Median Income **\$60,800**



Total Pop. **10,900**

LINCOLN COUNTY

Lincoln County is one of the least densely populated counties in Washington.

With fewer than five people per square mile, Lincoln County is among the state's top wheat-producing counties, second only to Whitman. Like other counties in EHF's service region, agriculture is a dominant economic driver. However, it is unique compared to its neighbors on all sides. Unlike Whitman, not only does it lack a major university, its largest town is only 1,700 people. Unlike Adams, it does not have a diversified crop or agricultural labor force. Unlike Ferry and Stevens, it does not share a significant amount of its land with a federally recognized tribe's reservation. (Though 2% of residents are Native American, attributable to the Spokane Tribe and Colville Tribes across its northern river border and some members living in and attending school in Lincoln County.) Like Spokane, it does have large swaths of private land available for taxation, but these areas remain largely undeveloped, and some residents must commute to Spokane to take advantage of additional employment.

QUICK LOOK

- **Annual Growth Projection:** 0.17%
- **Median Age:** 48.4
- **Median Income:** *White:* \$56,400 *Hispanic/Latino:* ND
Native American: \$38,800 *Asian:* \$76,300 *Black:* \$18,000



HEALTH OUTCOMES & FACTORS

Outcomes:

Among the middle range of counties in the state (20 of 39)

Factors:

Among the middle range of counties in the state (19 of 39)

WHAT STANDS OUT

- **Shortage of primary care physicians:** 2,690 : 1
- **Shortage of dentists:** 2,730 : 1
- **Adult obesity rate:**
County: 33% *WA State:* 29%
- **Years of premature death:**
County: 6,800 *WA State:* 5,600
- **Motor vehicle crash deaths per 100k:**
County: 24 *WA State:* 8
- **Children in poverty:** *All County:* 14% *White:* 22%
Hispanic/Latino: 24% *Native American:* ND
Asian: ND *Black:* ND

EMPLOYMENT LOOK

Lincoln County's late 2021 unemployment rate below 4% is not only among the best in the EHF service region, but in all of Washington, in recovering jobs lost during the coronavirus pandemic. The county's major employment sectors of wheat farming, government services, and healthcare were relatively insulated from pandemic layoffs. Government jobs, including schools, make up nearly half of jobs. Employment peaked in 2008 and has seen declines since then. New manufacturing and warehousing growth in western Spokane County, including an Amazon distribution facility, have brought employment opportunities to Lincoln County residents who are able to commute. Employment at Fairchild Airforce Base outside of Spokane and accessible along Highway 2 through Lincoln County is also notable.

TAKEAWAY

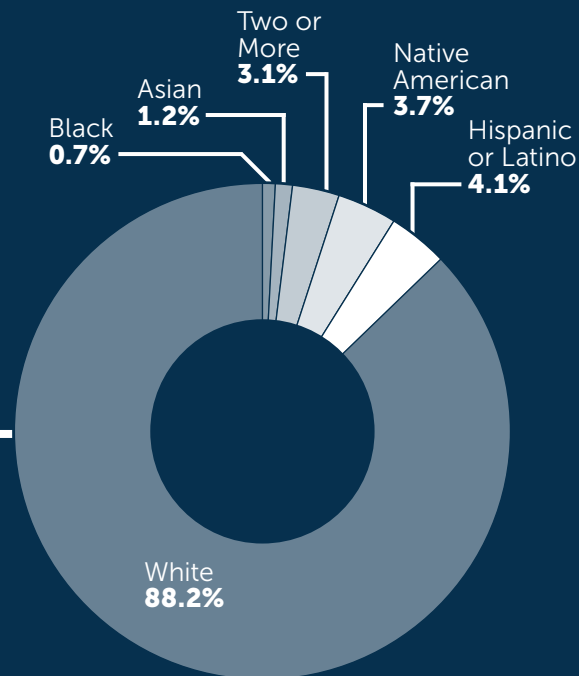
As the state Employment Security Department notes of Lincoln County: "Many small communities have experienced no growth or declines in the populations over the last decade." This trend is seen in age statistics: In 2019, nearly 26% of county residents were over age 65. Compare that to nearly 16% for Washington state, and 16.5% nationally. In other words, the county trends older, and population loss in small towns will exacerbate strains on resources and services. County residents already experience a shortage of doctors and dentists. The need for help in volunteer fire departments and rural emergency medical services will not decrease in the coming years, but the supply of younger people to take on these roles as current volunteers age out is a concern.

¹ Washington State Employment Security Department, 2020.
See esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/county-profiles/lincoln

² See previous



Median Income **\$52,000**



Total Pop. **13,400**

PEND OREILLE COUNTY

Nearly 13% of residents are at or below the federal poverty line.

Pend Oreille County is similar to its peer counties of Stevens and Ferry in several ways: First, all three are influenced by the presence of a federally recognized tribe – with 3.7% of county residents identifying as Native American alone. Second, a relatively large amount of federal land limits taxation, with only 36% of land privately owned. Third, historical employment drivers in timber and mining have seen steep declines in recent decades. Nearly 13% of residents are at or below the federal poverty line, though the county's ALICE rate of 22% is notable. The childhood poverty rate of 27% is the highest in the state.

QUICK LOOK

- **Annual Growth Projection:** 0.45%
- **Median Age:** 51
- **Median Household Income:** *White:* \$50,400
Hispanic/Latino: \$61,300 *Native American:* \$40,900
Asian: ND *Black:* ND



HEALTH OUTCOMES & FACTORS

Outcomes:

Among the least healthy counties in the state
(36 of 39)

Factors:

Among the least healthy counties in the state
(37 of 39)

WHAT STANDS OUT

- **Physical & mental health rating:** poor
- **Shortage of primary care physicians:** 1,940 : 1
- **Shortage of dentists:** 3,430 : 1
- **Adult obesity rate:**
County: 42% WA State: 29%*
- **Years of premature death:**
County: 8,700 WA State: 5,600
- **Percent of driving deaths alcohol involved:**
County: 71.4% WA State: 33%
- **Children in poverty:**¹ *All County: 27%* White: 17%
Hispanic/Latino: 1% Native American: 7%
Asian: ND Black: ND*

*Highest in WA State.

¹ This measure, captured in data from County Health Rankings, does not seem to adequately capture disaggregated data for racial groups. The county-wide number is a likely a dependable number, but the data available for racial groups, particularly Native Americans, could be incomplete.

² Washington State Employment Security Department, 2020.
See esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/county-profiles/pend-oreille

EMPLOYMENT LOOK

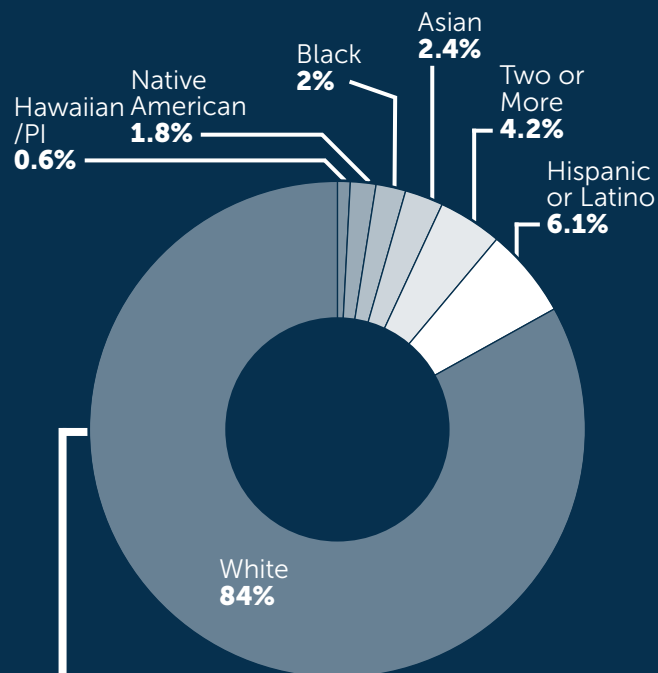
Pend Oreille has consistently had one of the highest unemployment rates in the state, second only to Ferry and often very close to its neighbor Stevens. It had a pre-pandemic unemployment rate of 7.9%, which ballooned to nearly 11% in 2020, not only due to pandemic layoffs, but to mine closures in 2019. Government employment accounts for more than half of jobs, with far fewer agricultural jobs than counties to the south. Notably, nearly one-third of employed residents commute to jobs outside the county.² This is due to Pend Oreille's unique border position: being next to Stevens and Spokane counties, being next to Idaho (with short proximity to jobs in Sandpoint), and bordering Canada. Notably, some residents and Kalispel members work for the tribe's business properties in and around Spokane.

TAKEAWAY

The three counties of northeastern Washington – Pend Oreille, Stevens, Ferry – are similar in several key ways of economics, demographics, and natural resources. But Pend Oreille stands out given its unique border position and the way the county surrounds the relatively small reservation of the Kalispel Tribe. The factors that lead to poor health outcomes are not unique to Pend Oreille, but the relative proximity to Spokane and North Idaho present opportunities not as readily available to rural residents of other counties in EHF's service area. Opportunities exist for investments in equity programs that address poverty and economic instability – particularly for families with children.



Median Income **\$60,000**



Total Pop. **540,000**

SPOKANE COUNTY

Spokane is by far the largest county by population in EHF's service region.

In some ways it is such an outlier that it can't adequately be compared to the other counties. But on other measures the county is similar to others. Outside of the main urban core in Spokane and the I-90 corridor, outer county residents face similar challenges of access to health care and other services seen by residents in much more rural counties. Agricultural crops such as wheat dominate farmland outside the urban area. Nearly 14% of Spokane County residents are at or below the federal poverty line, the same as the childhood poverty rate. That's not too far above the state childhood poverty rate of 12%. However, the county's ALICE rate of 22% is notable.

QUICK LOOK

- **Annual Growth Projection:** 0.99%
- **Median Age:** 37.8
- **Median Household Income:** *White:* \$58,200
Hispanic/Latino: \$48,800 *Native American:* \$41,500
Asian: \$53,000 *Black:* \$37,200



HEALTH OUTCOMES & FACTORS

Outcomes:

Ranked in the lower-middle of counties in WA
(26 of 39)

Factors:

Ranked in the higher-middle of counties in WA
(14 of 39)

WHAT STANDS OUT

- **Uninsured population:**
County: 7% WA State: 7%
- **Primary care physicians:**
County: 1,130: 1 WA State: 1,180: 1
- **Mental health providers:**
County: 240: 1 WA State: 250 : 1
- **Adult obesity rate:**
County: 29% WA State: 29%
- **Years of premature death:**
County: 6,600 WA state: 5,600
- **Rate of violent crimes per 100k:**
County: 353 WA state: 294
- **Children in poverty: All County: 14%**
White: 14% Hispanic/Latino: 23%
Native American: 24% Asian: 29% Black: 16%

EMPLOYMENT LOOK

Fairchild Air Force Base, the largest employer in the county, has long been an economic boon to the Spokane region. An additional 200 service personnel in 2021 added to the county's substantial employment in government services at the local, county, state, and federal levels. Health care services account for a significant number of jobs, which leads to Spokane County having better-than-state-average ratios of physicians and mental health professionals. Growth in private manufacturing and warehousing, notably from two large Amazon distribution facilities, has helped lower the county's unemployment rate during and coming out of the coronavirus pandemic.

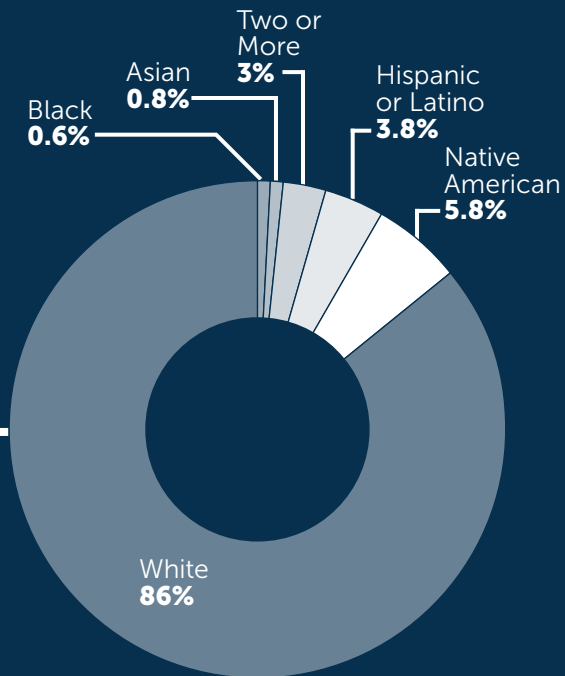
TAKEAWAY

Spokane and its urban population between the 2010 and 2020 censuses might be described as a tale of two counties. The city and county were hit hard by the Great Recession, and recovery was relatively slow. But immigration in the past seven years has boosted population, leading to nearly 10% growth since 2010. Jobs and expanded employment opportunities have followed. But as is well documented now, a severe housing crunch has exacerbated housing instability. Home prices have risen nearly 60% in two years, pricing out many local residents.¹ A shortage of available rental units has caused fast-rising rents that have added to housing costs burdens. Homelessness, particularly people sleeping outside, has reached levels not previously seen.

¹ This is explored in a Feb. 20, 2022, New York Times article about the relative unaffordability of Spokane, which reported: "Five years ago, a little over half the homes in the Spokane area sold for less than \$200,000, and about 70 percent of its employed population could afford to buy a home, according to a recent report commissioned by the Spokane Association of Realtors. Now fewer than 5 percent of homes — a few dozen a month — sell for less than \$200,000, and less than 15 percent of the area's employed population can afford a home. A recent survey by Redfin ... showed that home buyers moving to Spokane in 2021 had a budget 23 percent higher than what locals had." See nytimes.com/2022/02/20/business/economy/spokane-housing-expensive-cities.html



Median Income **\$55,000**



Total Pop. **46,000**

STEVENS COUNTY

Stevens County is by far the largest of its peer counties in northeastern Washington.

Its demographics and economy are similar to Ferry and Pend Oreille, but it differs in key ways. Though there are large areas of public land, far less of the county is federal or reservation – meaning there are more opportunities for private enterprise and taxation. The presence of the Spokane Indian Reservation almost entirely in the county means the population is nearly 6% Native American alone. A noticeable income disparity exists between the county's white and Native residents: the median income of white residents is \$52,000 but \$30,000 for Native Americans. Overall, the county has a 14.2% poverty rate, and a high ALICE rate of 23%. The childhood poverty rate of 22% is among the highest in the state.

QUICK LOOK

- **Annual Growth Projection:** 0.62%
- **Median Age:** 46.9
- **Median Household Income:** *White:* \$52,900
Hispanic/Latino: \$34,300 *Native American:* \$30,000
Asian: ND *Black:* ND



HEALTH OUTCOMES & FACTORS

Outcomes:

Ranked in the lower-middle of counties in the state (24 of 39)

Factors:

Among the least healthy counties in the state (30 of 39)

WHAT STANDS OUT

- **Physical & mental health rating:** poor
- **Uninsured population:**
County: 10% WA State: 7%
- **Students eligible for free or reduced lunch:**
County: 50% WA State: 43%
- **Adult tobacco smoking rate:**
County: 19% WA State: 12%
- **Years of premature death:**
County: 6,400 WA State: 5,600
- **Motor vehicle crash deaths per 100k:**
County: 21 WA State: 8
- **Children in poverty:** *All County: 22% White: 16% Hispanic/Latino: 29% Native American: 38% Asian: ND Black: ND*

*Highest in WA State.

EMPLOYMENT LOOK

Stevens County has historically seen similar unemployment rates as its peer counties of Ferry and Pend Oreille. December 2021 data put the county's rate at 5.3%, lower than its neighbors to the east and west. But it has also fared generally better than Ferry and Pend Oreille in two ways: proximity and manufacturing. First, a sizable number of county residents in the southern portion of the county have access to the Spokane County labor market. Second, the timber industry – extraction and processing – have longstanding infrastructure in Stevens County, particularly in the cities of Colville and Kettle Falls. Government employment, including schools, accounts for nearly 30% of jobs.¹

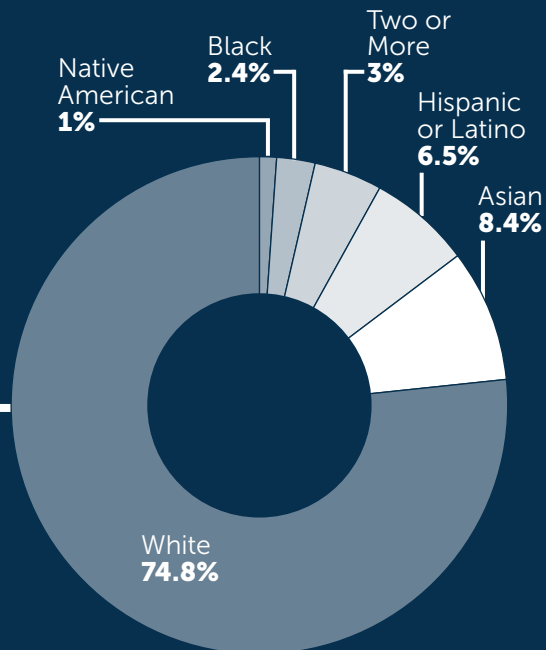
TAKEAWAY

While Stevens County stands out among its peer counties in ways that make it distinct, there are common threads that justify a close look at the tri-county region. All three are deeply influenced by the presence of separate reservation areas connected to them. All three have historical ties to mining and timber industries that have seen steep employment declines in recent decades. All three exhibit health outcomes or factors of concern. Stevens County is a leader among its peer counties in ability to create jobs and tax private land. Investment opportunities could include ways to harness this within Stevens County for the benefit of its own residents and that of its neighbors in similarly challenged counties.

¹ Washington State Employment Security Department, 2020. See esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/county-profiles/stevens



Median Income **\$46,000**



Total Pop. **48,000**

WHITMAN COUNTY

The presence of Washington State University's main campus in Pullman greatly affects Whitman County's statistics.

Without the university, the county would be very similar to Lincoln or Adams and its peer counties in southeastern Washington. As such, the university brings data points up and down, as evidenced by its state-leading rates of high school and college, similarly high rates of sexually transmitted infections, and lowest median age in EHF's service region. This plays out politically, too. Of eastern Washington's 20 counties, Whitman is the only one that voted for the Democratic presidential candidate in either 2016 or 2020. The influence of the WSU population on the rest of the county is also seen in income. The county's poverty rate of 26.5% is among the highest in the state. It has an ALICE rate of 22%. A state-leading income inequality level of 6.7¹ indicates a noticeable difference between top earners (largely at the university) and the rest of the county.

QUICK LOOK

- **Annual Growth Projection:** 0.47%
- **Median Age:** 24.7
- **Median Household Income:** *White:* \$45,700
Hispanic/Latino: \$24,300 *Native American:* \$63,300
Asian: \$25,800 *Black:* \$22,000

¹As measured in the County Health Rankings, this is the "ratio of household income at the 80th percentile to income at the 20th percentile."



HEALTH OUTCOMES & FACTORS

Outcomes:

Among the healthiest counties in the state
(3 of 39)

Factors:

Among the healthiest counties in the state
(3 of 39)

WHAT STANDS OUT

- **Years of premature death:**
County: 4,300 *WA State:* 5,600
- **Uninsured population:**
County: 6% *WA State:* 7%
- **High school completion:**
County:* 95% *WA State:* 91%
- **Adults with some college:**
County:* 85% *WA State:* 71%
- **Sexually transmitted infections per 100k:**
County:* 992 *WA State:* 465
- **Severe housing problems:**
County: 23% *WA State:* 17%
- **Income inequality:**
County:* 6.7 *WA State:* 4.4
- **Children in poverty:** *All County:* 14% *White:* 12%
Hispanic/Latino: 20% *Native American:* 43%
Asian: 33% *Black:* 26%

*Highest in WA State.

EMPLOYMENT LOOK

Whitman County's December 2021 unemployment rate is the best in EHF's service area – a consistent trend. Though known as a powerhouse producer of wheat and other grains, county employment isn't driven entirely by agriculture. The state Employment Security Department notes two points about the agricultural workforce: First, slow growth will proceed as wheat production is more mechanized. Second, finding replacement workers for retiring farmers will be a challenge, as nearly 23% of the county's workforce is age 55 or older.² Nearly 30% of residents work at WSU. While the university does dominate one sector of employment (and the service industry jobs that exist because of it), private enterprise and manufacturing have grown in recent years. About half of the 5,000 worldwide employees of Schweitzer Engineering Labs are based at its Pullman headquarters.

TAKEAWAY

At first glance, Whitman looks like a model county. Overall, health factors and outcomes are better compared to the rest of EHF service area. Its economy and employment outlook seem robust. But that misses the very wide gap between the WSU/Pullman population and everywhere else in the county. Similar to other counties in the region, small towns of several thousand or fewer residents struggle with jobs, economic vitality, healthcare access, and similar issues. Present in the WSU student population are health and income stability needs that the University alone cannot fully address.

² Washington State Employment Security Department, 2020.
See esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/county-profiles/whitman

CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF THE COLVILLE RESERVATION

- **Total Membership:** 9,365
- **Reservation Population:** ~6,800
- **Reservation Size:** 1.4M acres
- **Median Age:** 40 (WA state 37.9)
- **Median Household Income:** \$42,500
- **Poverty Level:** 23%

KALISPEL TRIBE OF INDIANS

- **Total Membership:** 470
- **Reservation Population:** ~760
- **Reservation Size:** 4,557 acres (+ 40 acres in Airway Heights)
- **Median Age:** 22.8
- **Median Household Income:** \$38,500
- **Poverty Level:** 24%

SPOKANE TRIBE OF INDIANS

- **Total Membership:** 2,900
- **Reservation Population:** ~2,150
- **Reservation Size:** 159,000 acres
- **Median Age:** 33.7 (WA state 37.9)
- **Median Household Income:** \$30,500*
- **Poverty Level:** 22%

*Lowest in EHF service area

TRIBES & RESERVATION AREAS

The three counties of northeastern Washington – Ferry, Stevens, Pend Oreille – are considered peers for their similar geographic features, natural resources, and historical ties to timber and mining. And all have higher populations of Native American residents compared to other counties and the state overall. All are heavily influenced by separate, sovereign reservations: Colville Confederated Tribes (Ferry/Okanogan); Spokane Tribe (Stevens); Kalispel Tribe (Pend Oreille).

WHAT STANDS OUT

- **Uninsured:** *WA state:* 7% *Colville:* 15.6% *Spokane:* 14.6% *Kalispel:* 19.5%
- **No bachelor's degree or higher:**
WA state: 67% *Colville:* 85.5% *Spokane:* 92% *Kalispel:* 92%
- **Nationwide COVID-19 hospitalizations per 100k:¹**
Native American: 1091* *Asian:* 362 *Black:* 800 *Hispanic/Latino:* 787 *White:* 502
- **Nationwide COVID-19 deaths per 100k:²**
Native American: 302* *Asian:* 132 *Black:* 251 *Hispanic/Latino:* 214 *White:* 228

*Highest of any racial group in U.S.

COLVILLE TRIBES

The reservation of the Colville Tribes is the largest of the three, and among the largest in the U.S. That's fitting for the membership size, and the geographically diverse 12 bands (Chelan, Chief Joseph Band of Nez Perce, Colville, Entiat, Lakes, Methow, Moses-Columbia, Nespelem, Okanogan, Palus, San Poil, Wenatchi) that make up the present-day Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. The reservation is unique in how it spans wide areas of two counties, Ferry and Okanogan, and has access to large swaths of timber and mining resources. Those available resources have allowed for harvesting and business enterprises that many other Northwest tribes do not have. As a result, the Colville Tribes' revenue streams are more diversified outside of gaming compared to other tribes. Those timber resources – and the revenue they provide – are increasingly threatened by devastating wildfires. Large complexes of fires, particularly in 2015, 2020, and 2021, burned numerous homes and destroyed hundreds of thousands of acres of timber and economic infrastructure on the reservation. The Colville Tribes are currently suing the federal government over the 2015 fires, claiming historical mismanagement and prioritizing other fires at the expense of the Tribes' physical and economic health.³

¹Health Equity Tracker, Accessed March 1, 2022. See https://healthequitytracker.org/exploredata?gclid=Cj0KCQjwklGKBhCxArlsAINMioJxRDlxE2Tlqzk_qcv-NuoHjS_he5Xbt0g4XCraQPJosiFrGypRJSlaAprNEALw_wcB&dt1=hospitalizations

²Health Equity Tracker, Accessed March 1, 2022. See https://healthequitytracker.org/exploredata?gclid=Cj0KCQjwklGKBhCxArlsAINMioJxRDlxE2Tlqzk_qcv-NuoHjS_he5Xbt0g4XCraQPJosiFrGypRJSlaAprNEALw_wcB&dt1=deaths

³Northwest Public Broadcasting, Aug. 4, 2021. See <https://www.nwpb.org/2021/08/06/colville-tribe-sues-federal-government-over-2015-fires-forest-mismanagement>

SPOKANE TRIBE

The Spokane Tribe lends more to EHF and its service region than the name of the largest city and county. The Tribe's history and influence are literally outside of EHF's downtown building, with the Spokane Falls – traditional and important fishing grounds – steps away. Those falls, and the hydroelectric projects that altered them and blocked salmon runs, remind why the Spokane Tribe works with EHF to address inequities on and off its reservation. The Tribe was an early EHF program partner with the Spokane Tribal Network established in 2012 (making it the first 501 (c)(3) on the reservation). STN has the goal of addressing historical trauma and adverse childhood experiences. Like the Colville Tribes, the Spokane Tribe has timber and other natural resources available, but in far smaller quantity, and similarly have been negatively affected by wildfires on and near the reservation. Gaming operations, and the jobs they provide for members, have expanded in recent years, but are not as large as other tribes in the region. The Two Rivers Resort at the confluence of the Spokane and Columbia rivers, is largely a seasonal operation in summer. It transitioned away from gaming in 2018. Off the reservation, the Chewelah Casino has historically been a small, local operation with no hotel. As of October 2021, the Tribe is adding a hotel at the casino near its Spoko Fuel gas station. The largest operation, the Spokane Tribe Casino in Airway Heights, opened in 2018 after many years trying to clear state, federal, and inter-tribal hurdles for a gaming operation on its own historical land close to a major population center.

KALISPEL TRIBE

Membership of the Kalispel Tribe is roughly broken into thirds: one-third living on the reservation, one-third living in the Spokane area, one-third living elsewhere in the U.S. Those who live in and near Spokane have access to jobs at the Tribe's multiple economic ventures in Spokane County, including Northern Quest Resort & Casino, Kalispel Golf & Country Club, and a commercial laundry service with major contracts in the Inland Northwest. A newly built casino and RV resort in Cusick has brought additional economic opportunities to members on the reservation. This is important for engaging members – more than 30% of whom are age 18 or younger – with potential jobs that keep them connected to the reservation.

TAKEAWAY

Obtaining reliable health and socio-economic data for each reservation area separate from the counties is difficult. Most data available don't disaggregate between county populations and ethnic/racial groups within those counties. Even fewer data are available specific to reservations. State and national data are available for Native Americans, but many sets are not specific to individual reservations.

Two points do stand out for the tribes in EHF's service area. First, poverty rates on the reservations are notably higher than both the counties and state overall. Second, median household incomes for Native Americans are generally much lower than the county, particularly compared to white residents. In Stevens County, the median household income of Native American residents, mostly living on the reservation of the Spokane Tribe, is more than \$20,000 less than the full county. Similar, though less pronounced, income disparities exist for Native American residents in Ferry and Pend Oreille counties.

DATA SOURCES & FURTHER READING

ALICE DATA

County rankings, and the associated threshold of income level for necessary for survival, come from a multi-state, inter-organizational, United Way-led project. It is rounded to the nearest American Community Survey income category and adjusted for household size and composition for each county. The data contained in this report are from 2018.

See more: unitedforalice.org/county-profiles/washington

COUNTY HEALTH RANKINGS

With funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, this site is a project of the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. It provides state- and county-level data and rankings on a broad array of health and demographic data.

See more: countyhealthrankings.org/app/washington/2021/overview

DATA USA

A project of private companies Deloitte and Datawheel in collaboration with MIT professor Cesar Hidalgo to collect and visualize various sources of government data across U.S. counties. The resulting data visualizations and profiles for each county helped inform profiles in this report.

See more: datausa.io

HEALTH EQUITY TRACKER

A collaborative project started during the COVID-19 pandemic, led by health researchers, data scientists and community advocates to collect up-to-date demographic data from hard-hit communities. Available data come from eight sources, including U.S. Census Bureau and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

See more: healthequitytracker.org

U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

In general, information from the 2020 and 2010 U.S. censuses is found throughout this report, as are data from the bureau's American Community Survey. See quick facts and compare multiple counties at once: census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045221. Updated American Community Survey data [will be available here](#) on March 17, 2022. **See more:** tinyurl.com/ACS2022Update

WASHINGTON EMPLOYMENT SECURITY DEPARTMENT

The state agency provides labor and other county-level economic outlook profiles for every Washington county.

See more: esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo

