

County Profile

Kitsap County

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CENTER FOR
ECONOMIC AND
BUSINESS RESEARCH



Table of Contents

<i>List of Figures and Tables</i>	2
<i>About Kitsap Economic Development Alliance</i>	3
<i>About the Authors</i>	3
<i>About this Report</i>	4
<i>Overview of Kitsap County Economy</i>	4
<i>Demographics</i>	5
Population by Race	7
<i>Healthcare</i>	8
<i>Cost Of Living Index and Living Wage</i>	8
Cost of Living Index.....	8
Living Wage	9
<i>Tribes and Tribal Corporations</i>	10
<i>Construction and Real Estate</i>	11
Building Permits	11
House Sales	12
Average Apartment Rent.....	13
<i>Employment</i>	16
Industry Share.....	17
<i>Education</i>	19
School Districts.....	19
Educational Attainment	19
After High School.....	20

List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Per Capita Income by County	6
Figure 2: Population by Race	7
Figure 3: Composite Cost of Living, First Quarter of 2025	9
Figure 4: Total Annual Building Permits Issued in Kitsap County	11
Figure 5: Building Permits Issued	12
Figure 6: All House Sales Annual Percentage Change	13
Figure 7: Average Apartment Rent (All Types of Units)	13
Figure 8: Average Apartment Rent Annual Percentage Change	14
Figure 9: Median House Resale Price	14
Figure 10: Median House Resale Price Annual Percentage Change	15
Figure 11: Unemployment Rates Over Time	16
Figure 12: Percentage of Annual Employment by Industry, 2024	17
Figure 13: Average Annual Wage by Industry, 2024	18
Figure 14: Map of High School Graduation Rates by Kitsap County School Districts	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 1: County Demographics	5
Table 2: Living Wage in Kitsap / King Counties, First Quarter of 2025	9
Table 3: Kitsap County High School Graduation Rates	19

About Kitsap Economic Development Alliance

Founded in 1983, the Kitsap Economic Development Alliance mission is to facilitate healthy economic growth and investments that support livable, resilient communities, driven by innovation and the diverse people and businesses of Kitsap. For more information, visit www.kitsapeda.org.

About the Authors

The Center for Economic and Business Research is an outreach center at Western Washington University and is located within the College of Business and Economics. The Center connects the resources found throughout the University to assist for-profit, non-profit, government agencies, quasi-government entities, and Tribal communities in gathering and analyzing useful data. We use a number of collaborative approaches to help inform our clients so that they are better able to hold policy discussions and craft decisions.

The Center employs students, staff, and faculty from across the University as well as outside resources to meet the individual needs of those we work with. Our work is based on academic approaches and rigor that not only provides a neutral analysis perspective but also provides applied learning opportunities. We focus on developing collaborative relationships with our clients and not simply delivering an end product.

The approaches we utilize are insightful, useful, and are all a part of the debate surrounding the topics we explore; however, none are absolutely fail-safe. Data, by nature, is challenged by how it is collected and how it is leveraged with other data sources; following only one approach without deviation is ill-advised. We provide a variety of insights within our work – not only on the topic at hand, but the resources (data) that inform that topic.

The Center for Economic and Business Research is directed by Hart Hodges, Ph.D. and James McCafferty.

Dr. Fouzia Awan, Ph.D., served as the lead economic analyst for this project. Sureerath Auengpradiporn, Abby Murphy, Bergen Sorby, Margot Hutter, and Dylan Braund contributed to data collection, economic analysis, written content, and visual data representation. Tony Peterson finalized the report's layout and presentation for publication.

About this Report

The following report is intended to give a basic overview of the Kitsap economy while illustrating factors that may impact it. Unless otherwise stated, the data in this report are the most recent complete annual data for the region, which at the time of publication, includes mostly data from 2025. Some data from 2024 are included, when noted. Counties listed in Table 1 below are often used throughout this report for comparison. All data and research included within this report are subject to revision.

Overview of Kitsap County Economy

Kitsap County, at 395 square miles, is geographically small. Uniquely different from the rest of Greater Seattle—Snohomish, King and Pierce Counties—Kitsap is a peninsula, lying directly west across the water from Seattle’s downtown. While you can drive to Kitsap in about an hour or more from Seattle, six county and state ferry routes leave from downtown Seattle heading to various points north and south in Kitsap, taking between 30 and 60 minutes to cross Puget Sound. With a population of approximately 288,960, Kitsap is also far smaller in population than its comparison counties. As a result of these geographic and population differences, as an exurban area Kitsap has its own, unique economy.

The public sector drives Kitsap’s economy, with federal, state and local government employing the largest share of workers in 2024 (37.2%). Naval Base Kitsap, across its five different installations in the County, employs nearly 39,000. That includes the County’s largest single employer, Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, and its 14,000 mostly civilian employees. Over the next decade, billions of dollars of federal investment are planned for the region under the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program.

After the government sector, Healthcare employed the second largest share of workers (13.5%) and remains a growing industry in the area, with over 1,680 job postings in Q4 2025. Kitsap also hosts another of the largest Healthcare private employers, St. Michael Medical Center/Franciscan Medical Group with 2,437 positions. After Healthcare, some of the largest employers in the region are Tribal corporations such as the Suquamish Tribe’s Port Madison Enterprises ranked the ninth top employer in the County and the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe’s Noo-Kayet Investments (ranked twentieth).

The real estate and residential construction industries reflect ongoing transitions in the Kitsap housing market. By Q3 2025, Kitsap County vacancies reached 6.3%, .07% higher than the Puget Sound average of 5.6%. Year over year, in Kitsap County the average one-bedroom apartment increased from \$1,713 in the third quarter of 2024 to \$1,744 in the third quarter of 2025, reflecting an annual increase of \$31.00.

On average, Kitsap County residents have higher rates of high school completion than those in the rest of Washington. Approximately 95.3% of residents have completed high

school, compared to 92.2% statewide. Most high school graduates pursuing further education stay in-state, with Kitsap's Olympic College being the top choice.

Demographics

County Demographics			
Category	Kitsap County	King County	Washington State
Population			
Population estimates, July 1, 2024	281,420	2,340,211	7,958,180
Population estimates base, April 1, 2020	275,605	2,269,697	7,705,267
Population, % change - April 1, 2020 (estimates base) to July 1, 2024	2.11%	3.11%	3.28%
Population, Census, April 1, 2020	275,605	2,269,675	7,705,281
Population Census, April 1, 2010	251,133	1,931,249	6,724,540
Total number of households	112,022	970,174	3,168,080
Labor Force			
In civilian labor force, total, % of population ages 16 years+, 2024	63.30%	70.60%	65%
In civilian labor force, female, % of population age 20 to 64 years, 2024	75.10%	80.40%	76.60%
Income and Poverty			
Median household income (in 2023 dollars), 2023	\$98,546	\$122,148	\$94,952
Median family income in the past 12 months (in 2024 dollars), 2024	\$122,879	\$166,582	\$120,265
Per capita income in past 12 months (in 2023 dollars), 2023	\$50,367	\$71,062	\$51,493
Persons in poverty, %	8.3%	8.4%	9.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 1: County Demographics

County demographics provide important context for interpreting the data presented in this profile. Kitsap County's population has grown, on average, 2.11% annually between 2020 and 2023 and 1.35% from 2024 to 2025. This growth was lower than King County (3.11%), and Washington State overall (3.28%).

Kitsap County's labor force participation for its working-age population (ages 20–64), stands at 80.7% and is slightly lower than the economic juggernaut that is King County (84.3%), but similar to the statewide number (81%). In 2023, Kitsap County's median household income was \$98,546, below King County's \$122,148 but above Washington State's \$94,952. All comparison regions noted income growth since 2022. Kitsap's median household income rose the most at 5.2%, compared with 4.99% in King County and 5.12% statewide. These gains, while notable, are about half the increases recorded from 2021 to 2022, when incomes rose 11.74% in Kitsap, 9.42% in King County, and 9.62% across Washington State.

In 2025, Kitsap County's per capita personal income was \$53,455, compared with \$74,100 in King County and \$53,744 statewide. As the fourth highest income among all Washington counties, Kitsap exhibits a strong economy. Despite notable income differences with the Seattle metro area, Kitsap's per capita income was just under Snohomish (\$54,628), and above Pierce (\$47,648).¹

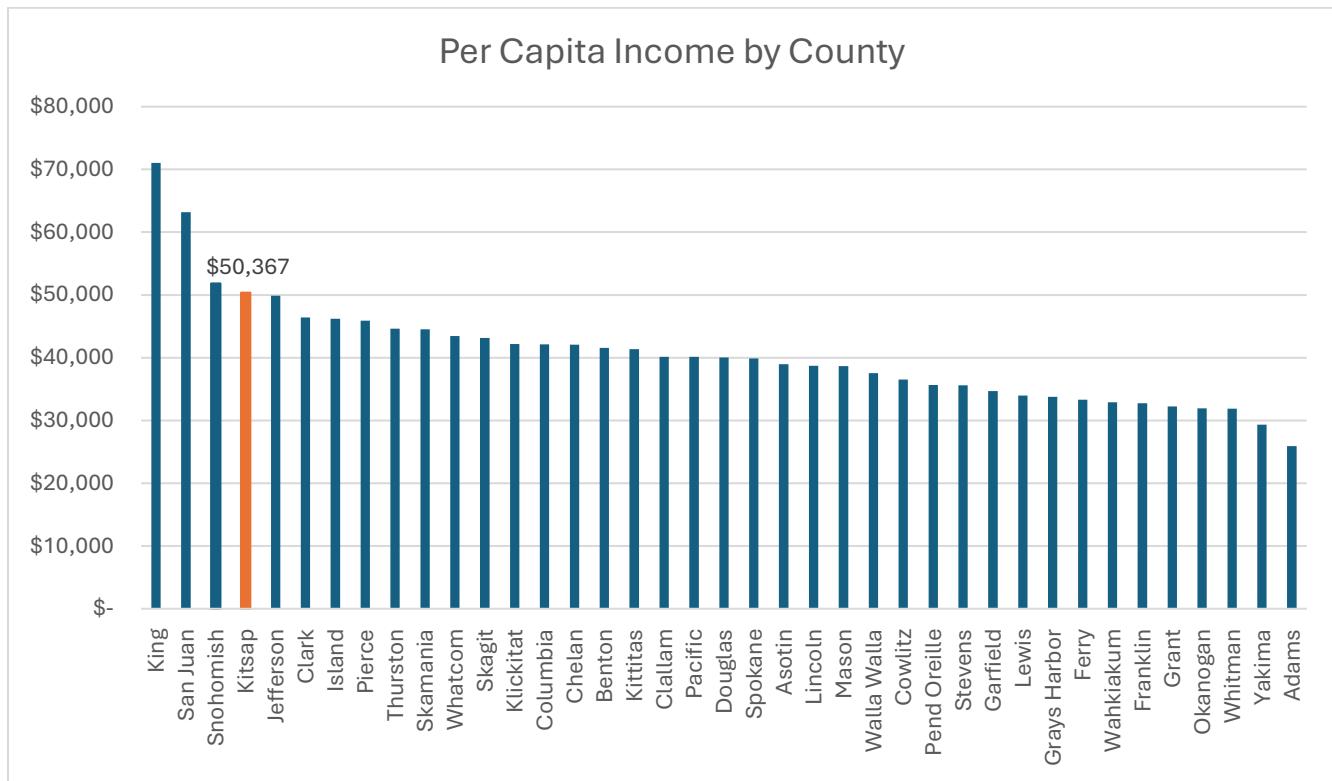
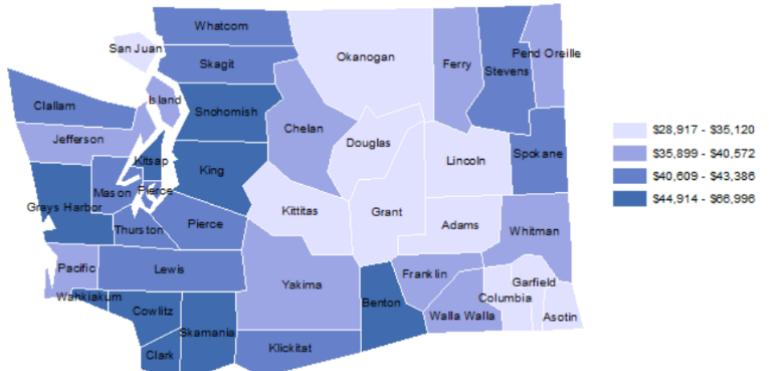


Figure 1: Per Capita Income by County

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The County's poverty rate also declined in 2025, falling to 7.8%, the first time it dipped below the 2021 level of 8.7%. King County's poverty rate decreased slightly from 8.5% in 2021 to 8.8% in 2025, while Washington State's rate declined from 10.2% to 9.9% over the same period.²



¹ Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis (FRED)

² US Census Bureau

Population by Race

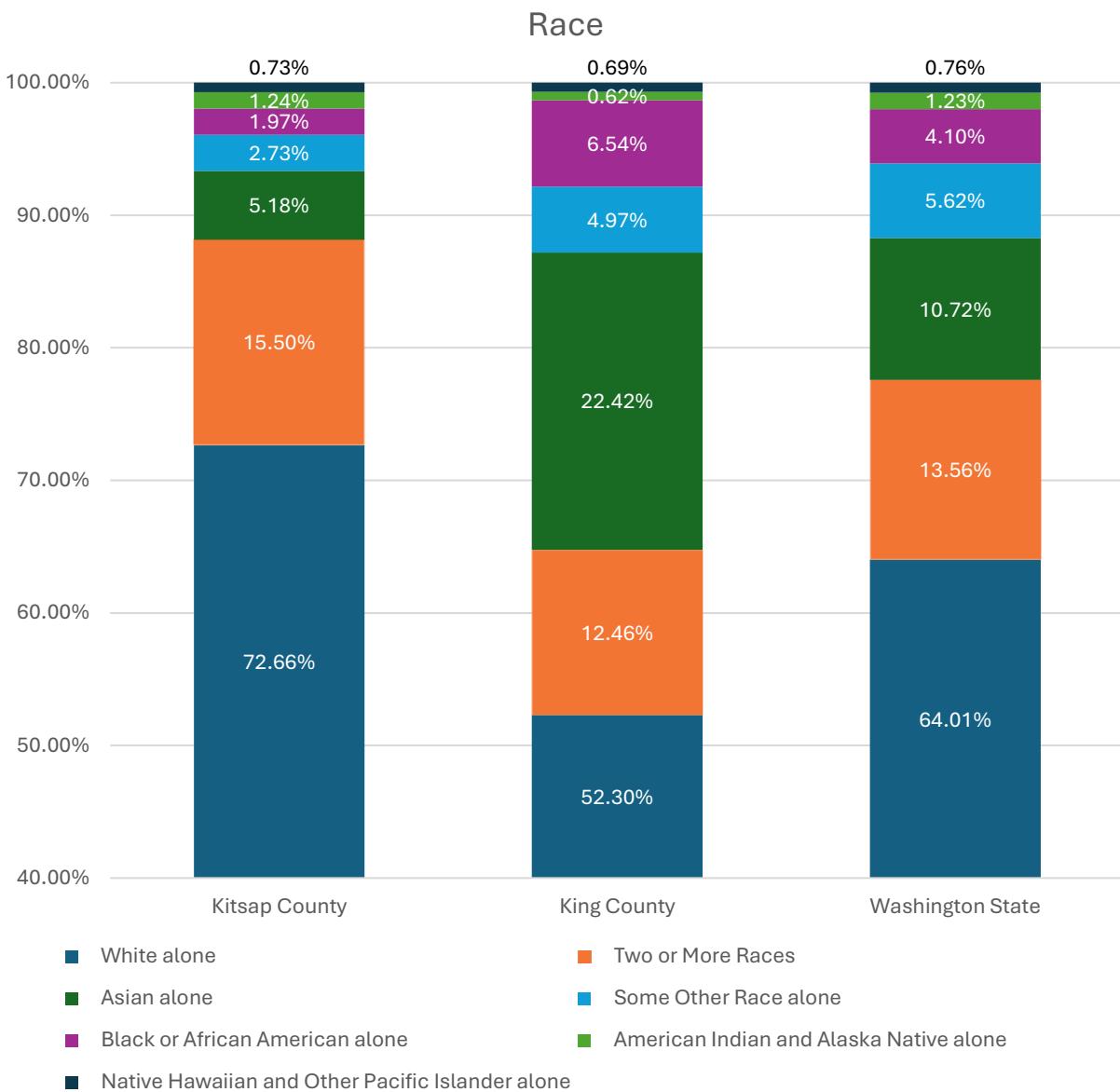


Figure 2: Population by Race

Source: US Census Bureau

Kitsap County has the highest share of white residents among the comparison areas, at 73.6%. This is followed by Washington State at 64.3% and King County at 54.3%. The second largest racial group in Kitsap County is residents identifying as two or more races, accounting for 11.6% of the population, which is slightly higher than the statewide rate of 11.4% and the rate in King County at 10.6%. All other racial groups in Kitsap County each make up less than 5% of the population, making the County the least diverse of the areas compared. It is worth noting that while not tabulated above, in Kitsap County, 9% of the population identifies as Hispanic or Latino.

Healthcare

The median age of Kitsap County is 39.9, with 64.5% of residents aged 18 to 64 and approximately 16.5% aged 65 or older. This indicates a strong labor force and ongoing demand for accessible primary and preventative health care services that cater to working adults and families.

Meanwhile, the share of residents aged 65 and older still highlights the need for aging-related care and chronic disease management in Kitsap County. As of 2024, the Washington Rural-Urban County Medicaid Workforce reported there are 548 medical doctors credentialed in Kitsap County, along with 2,700 registered nurses, 219 nurse practitioners, and 124 physician assistants³.

According to the Census Bureau report, Medicaid accounted for approximately 44% of the total hospital payer mix, while Medicare represented 17%, in 2025. The large share of Medicaid and Medicare spending indicates both a steady inflow of federal and state healthcare dollars and a dependence on public reimbursements that stabilize the regional healthcare market.

Kitsap County's social service network functions as an extension of its healthcare economy, supporting residents through behavioral health, long-term care, and community wellness programs. The long-term and elder care sector serves the County's 16.5% senior population, led by facilities such as Martha and Mary Health Services, Northwoods Lodge, and the Washington Veterans Home at Retsil.

Cost Of Living Index and Living Wage

Cost of Living Index

The cost-of-living index (COLI) provides a way to compare the costs of food, housing, utilities, transportation, healthcare, and other everyday expenses across regions. A composite index of 100 represents the national average, while an index above 100 indicates a higher cost of living. For example, if the COLI for Seattle is 125 and the national average is 100, living expenses in Seattle are about 25% higher than average.

In Q1 2025 Kitsap County's cost of living was 15.3% above the national average. Compared to nearby King County, which had a composite index of 144.5, Kitsap's overall cost of living was 17.9% lower. The cost of living in Kitsap was also lower than the Washington State average, which stood at 119.1, or about 19% higher than the national average. One way to put it: While the Greater Seattle area is more expensive than the typical "100" COLI of the

³ [Washington State Department of Health](#)

United States, Kitsap is regionally cost-effective when compared to other similar areas of the region.

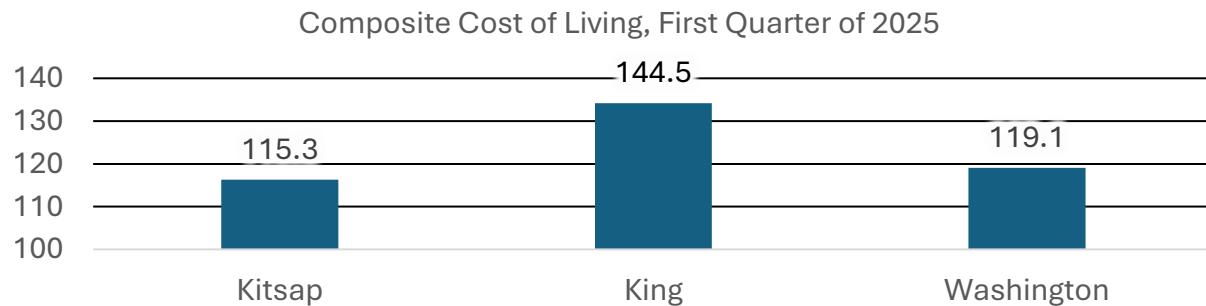


Figure 3: Composite Cost of Living, First Quarter of 2025
Source: US Census Bureau

Living Wage

Living wages are calculated by finding the point at which one-third of a worker's total income is allocated to housing costs. In the first quarter of 2025, the minimum livable wage in Kitsap County was \$26.65 per hour to afford a one-bedroom apartment. To afford a two-bedroom apartment, workers would need to earn \$30.62 per hour, and to afford the median mortgage in Kitsap, they would need to make \$47.62 per hour.⁴ These housing affordability thresholds highlight the growing pressure on household incomes in Kitsap County. At the same time, ongoing local and regional efforts to expand affordable housing options and attract higher-wage employment opportunities offer some encouragement that these challenges can be gradually mitigated in the coming years.

Living Wage in Kitsap County, First Quarter of 2025

Housing Type	Rate	Required household hourly wage	Required household weekly wage	Required Salary
Rent 1 bedroom	\$1,540.00	\$26.65	\$1,066.15	\$55,440.00
Rent 2 bedroom	\$1,769.00	\$30.62	\$1,224.69	\$63,684.00
Median home mortgage	\$2,751.60	\$47.62	\$1,904.95	\$99,057.53

Source: UW Apartment and Housing Report 2025 first quarter.
Table 2: Living Wage in Kitsap County, First Quarter of 2025

⁴ [UW Apartment Report](#)

Living Wage in King County, First Quarter of 2025

Housing Type	Rate	Required household hourly wage	Required household weekly wage	Required Salary
Rent 1 bedroom	\$1,795.00	\$30.82	\$1224.80	\$63,689.60
Rent 2 bedroom	\$2,108.00	\$36.50	\$1460.00	\$75,920.00
Median home mortgage	\$5,146.33	\$89.50	\$3580.00	\$186,160.00

Source: UW Apartment and Housing Report 2025 first quarter.

Table 3: Living Wage in Kitsap County, First Quarter of 2025

Tribes and Tribal Corporations

Since time immemorial, the “dxʷsəqʷəb” or Suquamish people, have called the Kitsap peninsula their home. In 1857, the County was named for Suquamish Chief “K’cap” or Kitsap, one of the most powerful Chiefs in the region during the early 19th century.

Over the past several decades, the Suquamish Tribe, as a sovereign nation, has fostered a government-to-government relationship with federal, state, and local governments. Together with local agencies, the Suquamish Tribe operates and manages the region’s fishery, as they have had for thousands of years.

Today, the Suquamish Tribe owns 57% of the Port Madison Indian Reservation and has considerable other landholdings in trust throughout Kitsap County. Port Madison Enterprises is an agency of the Suquamish Tribal Government that functions as the Tribe’s economic development arm. “PME’s” ventures include Clearwater Casino Resort, White Horse Golf Club, Kiana Lodge, PME Retail, Port Madison Enterprises Construction Corporation, Suquamish Evergreen Corporation. Suquamish Seafood is another firm owned by PME integral to the Suquamish economy which connects Tribal fishers with consumers.

Kitsap County is also home to the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe, which has around 1,400 registered Tribal members and has resided in the region for over 4,000 years. The Tribe has a variety of departments, including those focused on natural resources management, early childhood education, family services, and public safety.

Noo-Kayet⁵ Investments is the economic development arm of the Tribe. It provides career and entrepreneurship guidance for the Tribe and Tribal members and manages economic initiatives and revenues for the Tribal government. Operations include The Point Casino & Hotel, Gliding Eagle Market, High Point Cannabis, and Ascension Craft Cannabis. The Port Gamble reservation is located in the north end of the County⁶.

⁵ <https://noo-kayet.com>

⁶ <https://pgst.nsn.us/>

Together, these two Tribes and their corporate arms are major employers in Kitsap. The Suquamish Tribal government employs 386 while Port Madison Enterprises is the County's second largest private employer with 810 employees. The Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribal government employs 355, and Noo-Kayet 451.⁷

Construction and Real Estate

Building Permits

Building permits see large fluctuations throughout the year; therefore, annual totals were used in this analysis. In Kitsap County in 2024, 1,294 building permits were issued, which represents a 42.7% decrease in total building permits issued since 2023.

Out of the 1,249 total permits issued, 976 were permits for new single-family residences⁸. Single-family building permits saw a 3.0% decrease in annual building permit issuance in 2024.

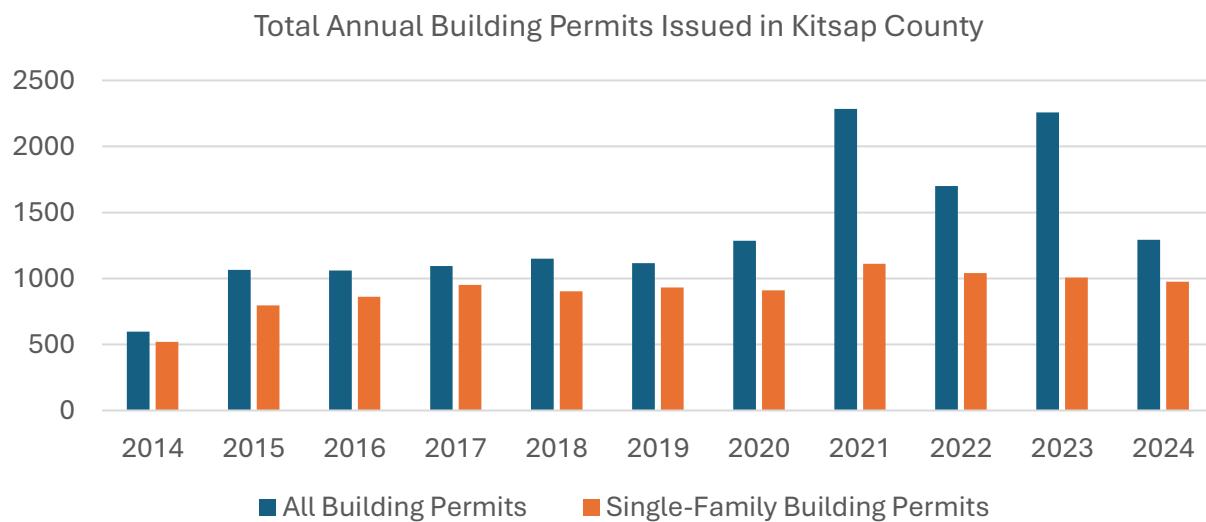


Figure 43: Total Annual Building Permits Issued in Kitsap County

Source: Washington Center for Real Estate Research

The graph below provides another perspective on building permit activity. It shows permit issuance in the first quarter of each year, which frequently has the highest activity of the year, as developers often submit applications early to align construction schedules with the spring and summer building season. Between the first quarter of 2023 and the first quarter of 2024, there was a significant decrease in the number of building permits issued,

⁷ Kitsap Economic Development Alliance, 2024 Top Employers List.

⁸ Single-family residences are free-standing structures containing one dwelling unit with a permanent foundation. They are only occupied by one household, and do not share walls with other households.

with 748 permits issued in the first quarter of 2023 and 400 permits issued in the first quarter of 2024.⁹

This trend continued with a notable decline between the first quarter of 2024 and the first quarter of 2025, with only 187 permits issued in the first quarter of 2025. This portends a potential slowdown or adjustment in construction activity in Kitsap County after the peak observed in 2023¹⁰.



Figure 5: Building Permits Issued

Source: Washington Center for Real Estate Research

House Sales

Kitsap County experienced a 7.0% increase in home sales between the fourth quarter of 2023 and the fourth quarter of 2024. This marks a shift from the declines seen in 2022 and 2023, when home sales fell by 8.5% and 25.2%, respectively. Kitsap is not alone in this rebound—neighboring counties such as King, Pierce, and Snohomish have also seen modest increases in housing activity after several years of slowdown. Washington saw a 5.0% increase in home sales between the fourth quarter of 2023 and the fourth quarter of 2024, suggesting that the recovery in housing activity is part of a broader statewide trend. This annual uptick may reflect improving market confidence, a slight easing in mortgage rates, and increased housing supply as new listings entered the market. Additionally, some buyers who had postponed purchases during periods of higher interest rates may have re-entered the market, contributing to the rise in sales.¹¹

⁹ [Washington Department of Revenue](#)

¹⁰ [Washington Department of Revenue](#)

¹¹ [Washington Department of Revenue](#)

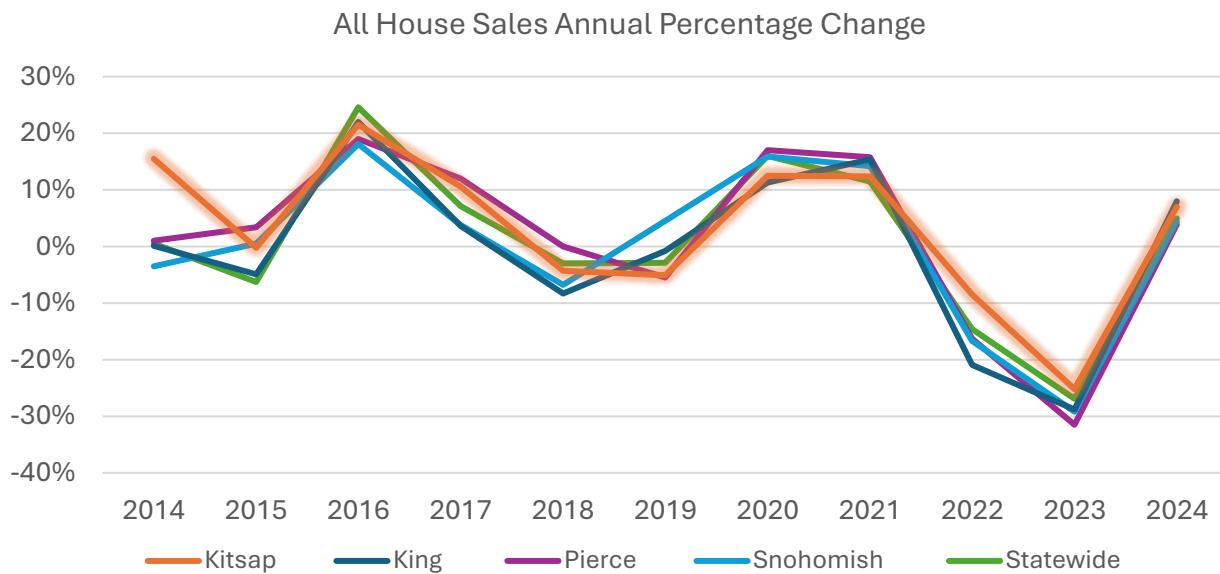


Figure 64: All House Sales Annual Percentage Change
Source: Washington Center for Real Estate Research

Average Apartment Rent

Between the fourth quarter of 2023 and the fourth quarter of 2024, average apartment rents increased by 7.72% in Kitsap County and 4.25% in King County. By the end of 2024, average monthly rent reached \$1,716 in Kitsap County, \$2,061 in King County, and \$1,819 statewide.

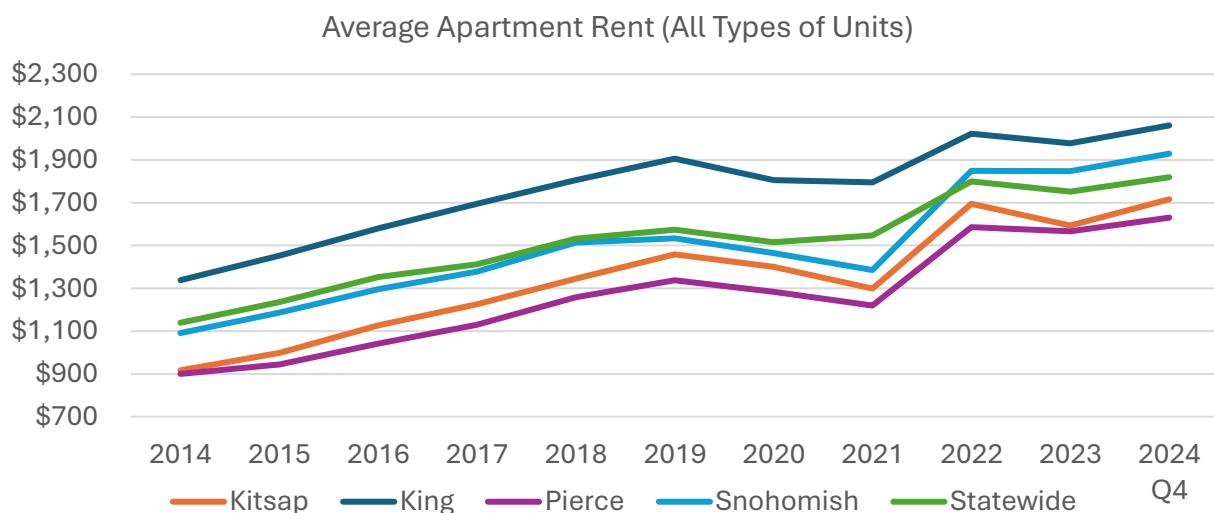


Figure 75: Average Apartment Rent (All Types of Units)
Source: Washington Center for Real Estate Research

These changes align with the statewide trend, where apartment rents increased by 3.88% in the fourth quarter of 2024. This represents a shift from the fourth quarter of 2023, when average rents declined by 6.02% in Kitsap County, 2.27% in King County, and 3.88% statewide¹².

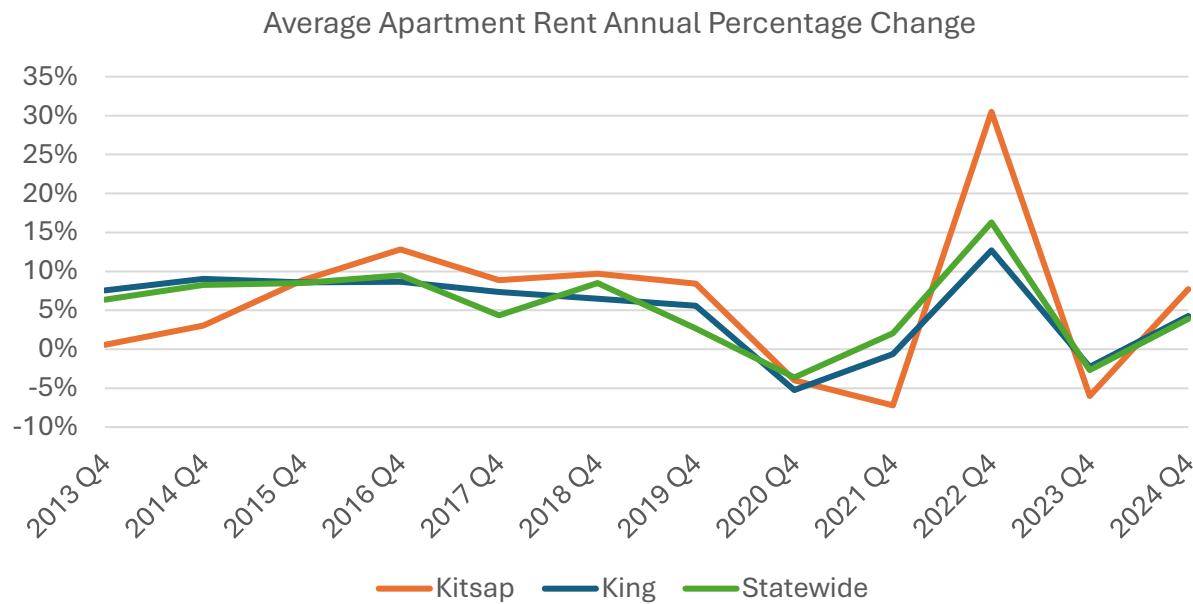


Figure 8: Average Apartment Rent Annual Percentage Change

Source: Washington Center for Real Estate Research

Median House Resales

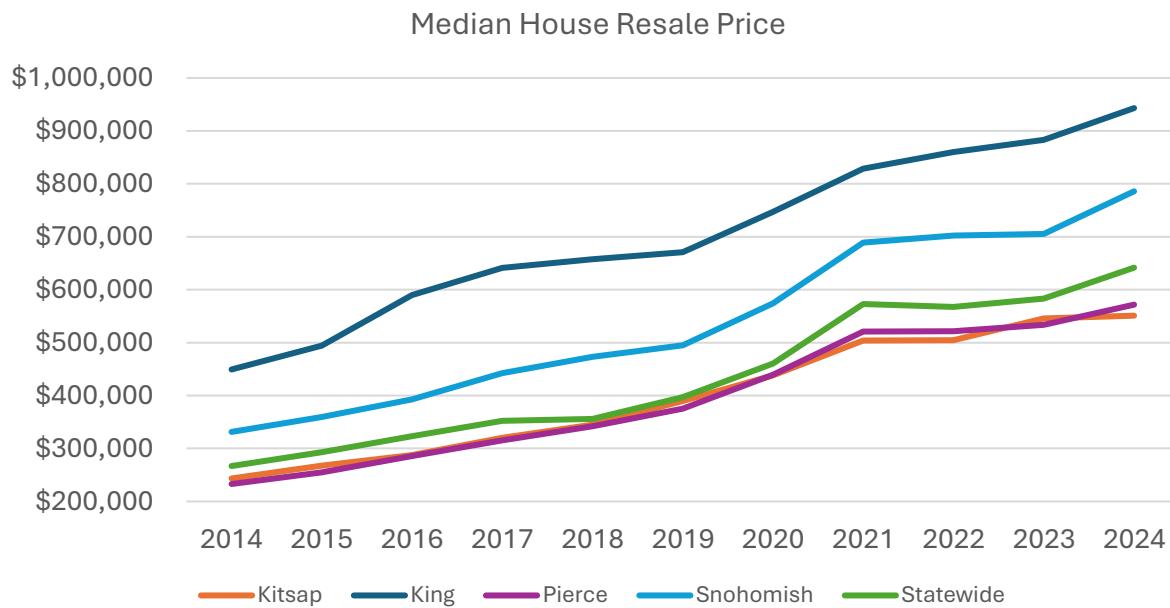


Figure 9: Median House Resale Price

¹² [Washington Department of Revenue](#)

Source: Washington Center for Real Estate Research

Over the past decade, median house prices in Kitsap County have steadily increased, reflecting a strong and growing local housing market. While prices in Kitsap remain lower than those in King County, residents have seen consistent gains in home values, mirroring trends across Washington state. This steady rise highlights the County's appeal as a more affordable option while still experiencing healthy growth in the housing market. Indeed, cost-of-living data regarding housing costs tends to show that Kitsap is far more affordable than King County in terms of housing costs.¹³

Between the fourth quarter of 2023 and the fourth quarter of 2024, the median resale home price rose 0.9% in Kitsap County to \$551,000. In comparison, prices increased 6.8% in King County to \$943,100 and 10.0% statewide to \$641,700.

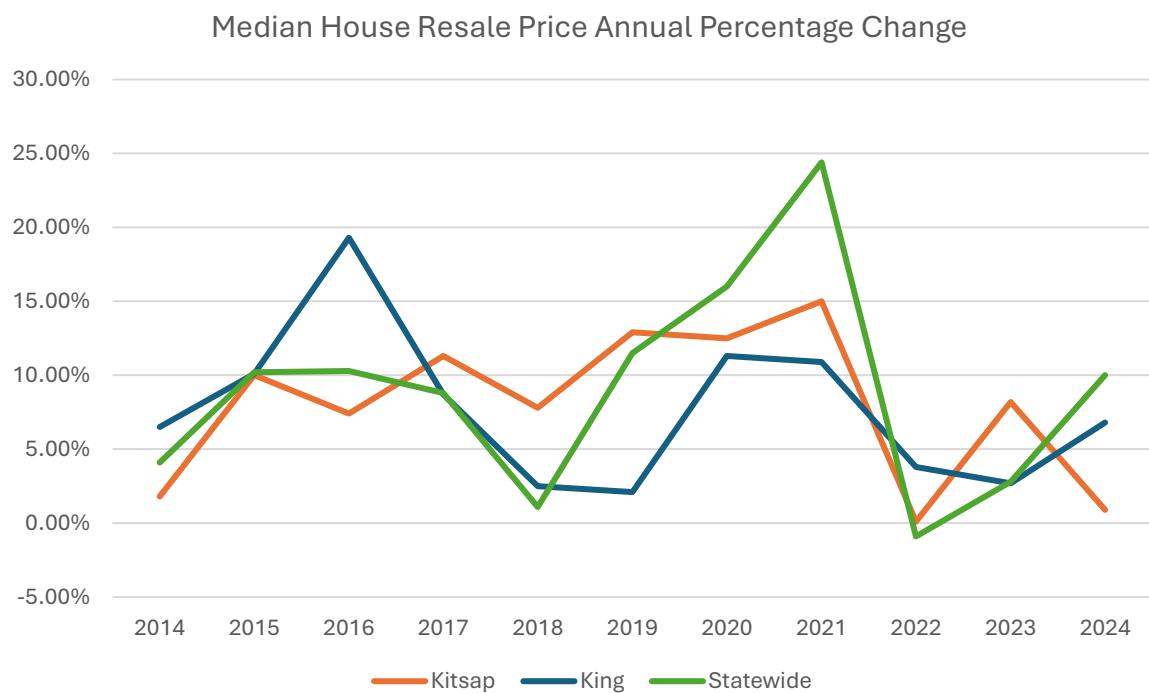


Figure 10: Median House Resale Price Annual Percentage Change

Source: Washington Center for Real Estate Research

¹³ <http://kitsapedia.org>

Employment

Kitsap County's unemployment rates have, historically, been slightly below the average for Washington State, but in recent years they've become quite similar. Kitsap employment was less volatile than most other counties in Washington during the 2020 unemployment spike due to high public employment. Since 2020, unemployment rates have dropped, and Kitsap unemployment has been nearly identical to the state average, though, from 2021 – 2024 was higher than King County. However, in 2025 the Kitsap unemployment rate dropped significantly to 3.4% while the statewide average stayed at 4.5%.¹⁴

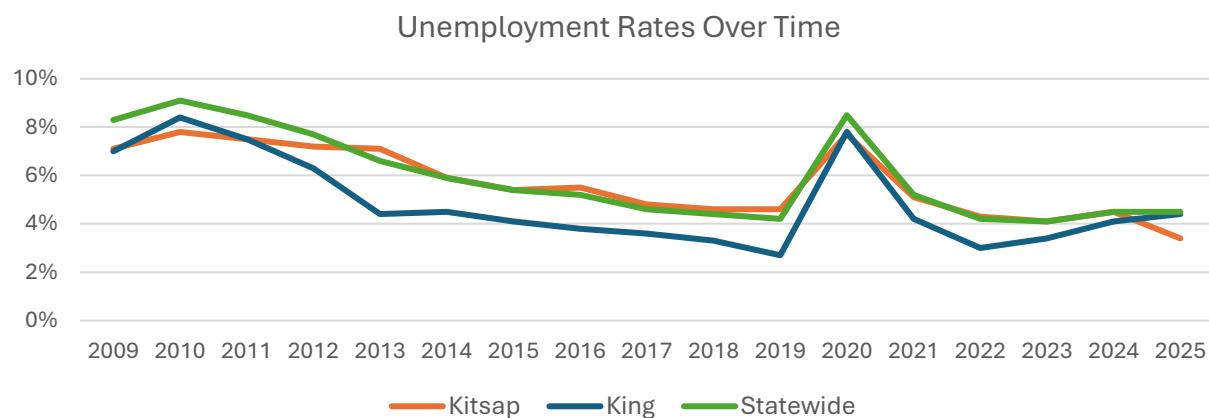


Figure 61: Unemployment Rates Over Time

Source: FRED Economic Data

¹⁴ [FRED Economic Data](#)

Industry Share

The workforce in Kitsap County is primarily made up of government employees (37.2%), followed by healthcare and retail trade (13.5% and 11.3%, respectively). These are followed by accommodation and food services (8.8%), professional, scientific and technical services (6.0%), construction (4.7%), administrative and waste services (3.4%), manufacturing (2.7%), and other services, except public administration (2.7%)¹⁵.

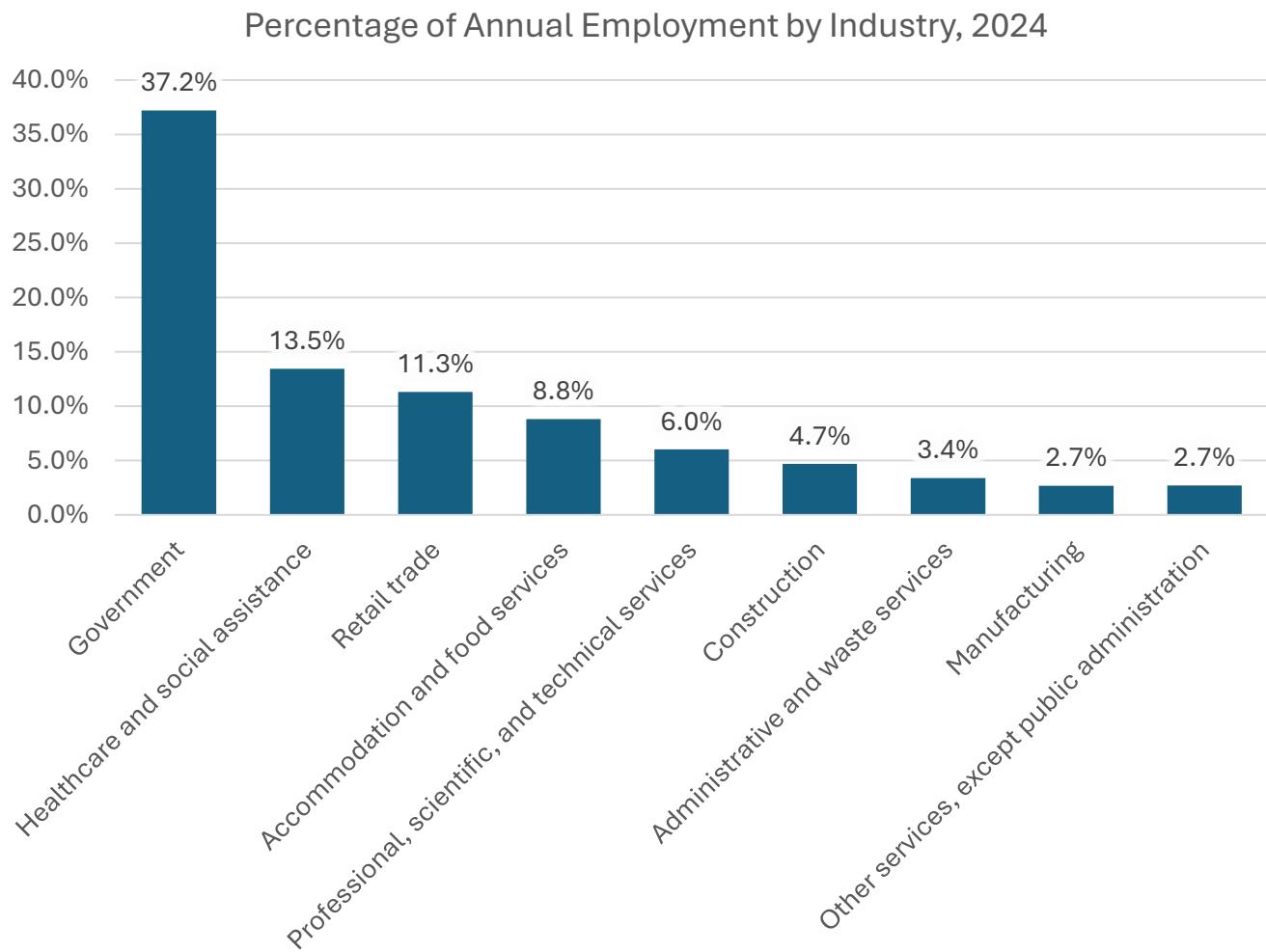


Figure 72: Percentage of Annual Employment by Industry, 2024

Source: Washington Employment Security Department

¹⁵ [Employment Security Department](#)

In Kitsap County, wages paid to government employees make up around 46.9% of total wages paid. However, government was ranked 6th in order of average wages paid by industry. The industry with the highest average annual wage in 2024 in Kitsap County was information, at \$146,038 per year. Utilities followed at an average annual wage of \$123,380. The lowest paid sector in the County by average annual wage was arts, entertainment, and recreation, at \$28,707¹⁶.

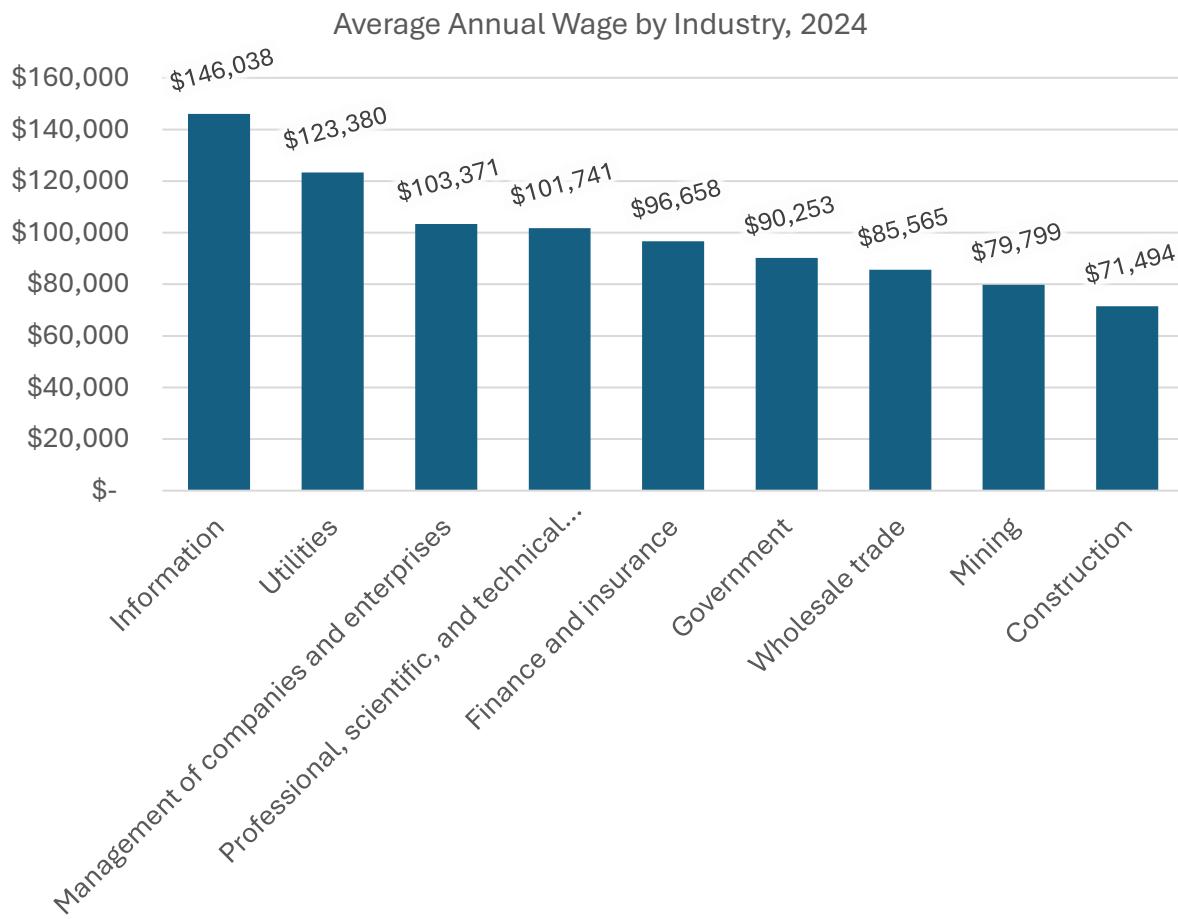


Figure 13: Average Annual Wage by Industry, 2024
Source: Washington Employment Security Department

¹⁶ [Employment Security Department](#)

Education

School Districts

Kitsap County has five school districts: North Kitsap, Central Kitsap, South Kitsap, Bremerton, and Bainbridge Island.

Bainbridge Island School District has a 4-year graduation rate over 95.57%. North Kitsap, Central Kitsap, and South Kitsap followed at 90.11%, 89.41%, and 82.31%, respectively. Bremerton trails significantly with a 71.11% graduation rate, with at least two significant factors impacting that statistic: One, a higher poverty rate at 13.5% than the rest of Kitsap at 8.7%; and two, data reporting challenges related to it being the local center of the defense industry, as students of military families are at a higher-than-average risk of not being counted in state data due to moves related to family deployments and billet reassessments.

Kitsap County High School Graduation Rates		
District	School	4-yr Graduation Rate
Bainbridge Island	Bainbridge High School	97.6%
	Eagle Harbor High School	77.0%
Bremerton	Bremerton High School	73.9%
	Renaissance Alternative High School	45.7%
Central Kitsap	Barker Creek Community School	79.0%
	Central Kitsap High School	92.9%
	Klahowya Secondary School	90.2%
	Olympic High School	91.1%
North Kitsap	Kingston High School	93.4%
	North Kitsap High School	92.4%
South Kitsap	Explorer Academy	81.8%
	South Kitsap High School	89.6%

Table 4: Kitsap County High School Graduation Rates

Source: Data.wa.gov 2023-24 data

Educational Attainment

On average, Kitsap County residents have higher rates of high school completion than those in the rest of Washington. About 95.3% of residents have finished high school, compared with 92.2% statewide. The County's workforce is also considered highly skilled, supported by the presence of the shipyard and other major employers¹⁷.

¹⁷ [Washington State Open Data Portal](#)

When it comes to higher education, 36.5% of Kitsap residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher, slightly below the statewide rate of 38.8%. For comparison, the national average is 34.3% with a bachelor's degree or higher, and 89.1% with at least a high school diploma¹⁸.

After High School

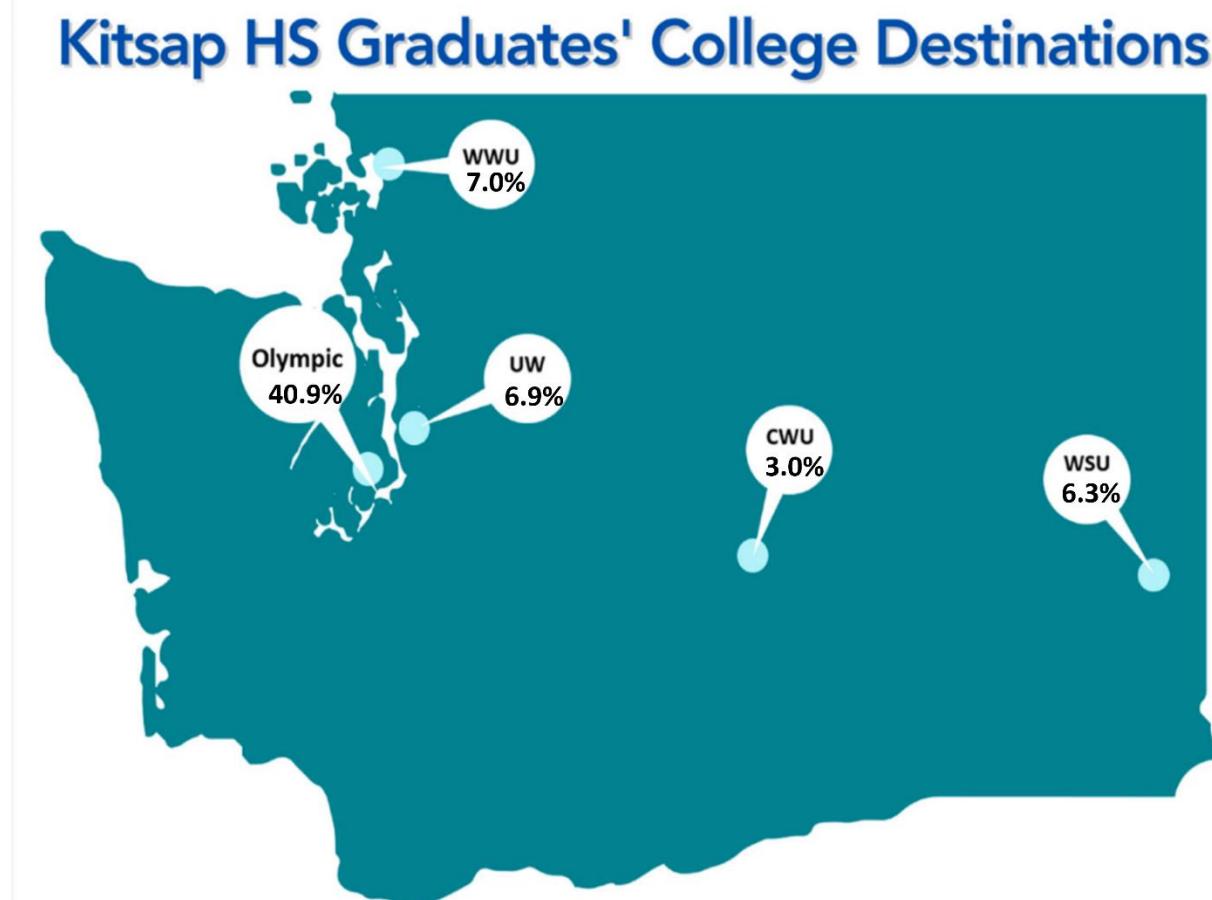


Figure 84: Map of Kitsap High School Graduates' College Destinations within Washington State
Source: Data.wa.gov 2023 data

Approximately 73% of Kitsap County high school graduates pursuing further education stay in the state to do so. Of those students, 40.9% elect to attend Olympic College in Bremerton, while about 7% decide to attend Western Washington University in Bellingham. Another 6.9% attend the University of Washington in Seattle, 6.3% attend Washington State University in Pullman, and 3% attend Central Washington University in Ellensburg. Most of the rest of Kitsap graduates pursuing higher education attend either a 2-year school in Washington or a 4-year institution out of state¹⁹.

¹⁸ [US Census Bureau](#)

¹⁹ [Washington State Open Data Portal](#)