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## Spokane County, Washington

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Coordinates: 47°62′N 117°40′W

**Spokane County** is a county located in the U.S. state of Washington. As of the 2020 census, its population was 539,339, making it the fourth-most populous county in Washington.<sup>[a]</sup> The largest city and county seat is Spokane,<sup>[a]</sup> the second largest city in the state after Seattle. The county is named after the Spokane tribe.

Spokane County is part of the Spokane-Spokane Valley metropolitan statistical area, which is also part of the greater Spokane-Coeur d'Alene combined statistical area that includes nearby Kootenai County, Idaho.

### History [ edit ]

*See also: History of Spokane, Washington*

The first humans to arrive in what is now Spokane County arrived between 12,000 and 8,000 years ago and were *hunter-gatherer* societies who lived off the land in the area. Initially, the settlers hunted predominantly *bison* and *antelope*, but after the game migrated out of the region, the native people became dependent on gathering various roots, berries, and nuts, and harvesting fish.<sup>[a]</sup> The Spokane tribe, after which the county is named, means "Children of the Sun" or "sun people" in Salishan.<sup>[a]</sup> Explorer-geographer David Thompson, working as head of the North West Company's Columbia Department, became the first European to explore what is now the Inland Northwest.<sup>[a]</sup> After establishing the Kullyspell House and Saleesh House fur trading posts in what are now Idaho and Montana, Thompson then attempted to expand further west. He sent out two trappers, Jacques Raphael Finlay and Finan McDonald, to construct a fur-trading post on the Spokane River in Washington and trade with the local Indians.<sup>[a]</sup> This post was established in 1810, at the confluence of the Little Spokane and Spokane Rivers, becoming the first enduring European settlement of significance in Washington.<sup>[a]</sup> Known as the *Spokane House*, or simply "Spokane", it was in operation from 1810 to 1826.<sup>[a]</sup>

Spokane County was established by the Washington legislature effective January 29, 1858. It was annexed by Stevens County on January 19, 1864, and recreated on October 30, 1879.<sup>[7][a]</sup> The first post office in the county was located at Spokane Bridge.<sup>[9]</sup> The current Spokane county seat holder, Spokane, wrested the seat from Cheney in 1886.<sup>[10][11]</sup>

### Geography [ edit ]

According to the United States Census Bureau, the county has a total area of 1,781 sq mi (4,610 km<sup>2</sup>), of which 17 square miles (44 km<sup>2</sup>) (0.9%) are covered by water.<sup>[12]</sup> The lowest point in the county is the Spokane River behind Long Lake Dam (boundary of Stevens County) at 1,538 feet (469 m) above sea level. (Virtually no change in elevation occurs between the dam and the mouth of the Little Spokane River inside Riverside State Park.) The highest point in the county is the summit of Mount Spokane at 5,887 ft (1,794 m).<sup>NAVD 88</sup><sup>[13]</sup>

Spokane County has a complex geologic history and varied topography. To the west is the barren landscape of the Columbia Basin and to the east are the foothills of the Rockies—the Coeur d'Alene Mountains, which rise to the east in northern Idaho. Spokane County lies in a transition area between the eastern edge of the basaltic Channeled Scablands steppe plains to the west and the rugged, timbered Rocky Mountain foothills to the east.<sup>[14]</sup> The area exhibits signs of the prehistoric geologic events that shaped the area and region such as the Missoula Floods, which ended 12,000 to 15,000 years ago.<sup>[15]</sup> The geography to the southeast, such as the Saltese Flats and Saltese Uplands is characterized as a shrub–steppe landscape with grassy hills and ravines.<sup>[16]</sup>

In ecology, as with the topography, the county is also in a transition area, roughly split between the Columbia Plateau ecoregion in the southwest portion, where it is at the eastern edge of the basaltic Channeled Scablands steppe plain and the Northern Rockies ecoregion in the northwest portion, which is the rugged and forested Selkirk Mountains.<sup>[17][18]</sup>

### Rivers [ edit ]

- Spokane River
- Little Spokane River
- Latah Creek
- Deep Creek
- Cable Creek
- Saltese Creek

### Lakes and reservoirs [ edit ]

- Medical Lake
- West Medical Lake
- Liberty Lake

- Newman Lake
- Shelley Lake

### Notable summits and peaks [ edit ]

- Mount Spokane
- Mount Kit Carson
- Mica Peak
- Krell Hill

### Notable parks [ edit ]

- Dishman Hills Natural Conservation Area
- Riverside State Park
- Riverfront Park
- Manito Park
- Mount Spokane State Park

### National protected area [ edit ]

- Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge

### Major highways [ edit ]

- 60 Interstate 90
- 2 U.S. Route 2
- 195 U.S. Route 195
- 395 U.S. Route 395
- 27 State Route 27

- 206 State Route 206
- 290 State Route 290
- 291 State Route 291
- 902 State Route 902
- 904 State Route 904

### Adjacent counties [ edit ]

- Stevens County – northwest
- Pend Oreille County – north
- Benton County, Idaho – north
- Kootenai County, Idaho – east

- Benewah County, Idaho – southeast
- Whitman County – south
- Lincoln County – west

### Demographics [ edit ]

#### 2020 census [ edit ]

As of the 2020 census, there were 539,339 people, 209,640 households were residing within the county. The population density was 305.7 people per square mile (118.0 people/km<sup>2</sup>) averaging 2.46 persons per household. The 227,877 housing units had an average density of 128 units per square mile (49 units/km<sup>2</sup>).<sup>[24]</sup>

Females consisted of 50.1% of the county. 5.6% of persons are less than 5 years of age. 21.8% are under 18 years, and 16.8% are 65 years or older.<sup>[24]</sup>

The racial makeup of the county was 88.4% White, 6.6% Hispanic or Latino, 4.5% two or more races, 2.5% Asian, 2.1% Black or African American, 1.9% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 0.7% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. 5.3% of the county consist of foreign born persons.<sup>[24]</sup>

Of those 25 years or older, 94.2% of the county hold a high school diploma, GED, or higher; and 31.5% obtaining a bachelor's degree or higher. Of those below the age of 65 years, 10% have a disability and 6.3% are without health insurance. The median household income was \$64,079 (in 2021 dollars) and 11.2% of the county are living in poverty.<sup>[24]</sup>

#### 2010 census [ edit ]

As of the 2010 census, there were 471,221 people, 187,167 households, and 118,212 families were residing in the county.<sup>[25]</sup> The population density was 267.2 people per square mile (103.2 people/km<sup>2</sup>). The 201,434 housing units had an average density of 114.2 units per square mile (44.1 units/km<sup>2</sup>).<sup>[26]</sup> The racial makeup of the county was 89.2% White, 2.1% Asian, 1.7% African American, 1.5% American Indian, 0.4% Pacific Islander, 1.2% from other races, and 3.8% from two or more races. Those of Hispanic or Latino origin made up 4.5% of the population.<sup>[25]</sup> In otherances, 27.0% were German, 15.4% were Irish, 13.5% were English, 6.9% were Norwegian, and 4.4% were American.<sup>[27]</sup>

Of the 187,167 households, 30.9% had children under 18 living with them, 47.2% were married couples living together, 11.2% had a female householder with no husband present, and 36.8% were not families; 28.6% of all households were made up of individuals. The average household size was 2.44, and the average family size was 2.99. The median age was 36.8 years.<sup>[28]</sup>

The median income for a household in the county was \$47,250 and for a family was \$59,999. Males had a median income of \$44,000 versus \$33,878 for females. The per capita income for the county was \$25,127. About 9.1% of families and 14.1% of the population were below the poverty line, including 17.0% of those under age 18 and 8.5% of those age 65 or over.<sup>[28]</sup>

#### 2000 census [ edit ]

As of the 2000 census, there were 417,939 people, 163,611 households, and 106,019 families were in the county. The population density was 237 people per square mile (92 people/km<sup>2</sup>). The 175,005 housing units had an average density of 99 units per square mile (38 units/km<sup>2</sup>). The racial makeup of the county was 88.62% White, 2.00% African American, 1.40% Native American, 1.88% Asian, 0.16% Pacific Islander, 0.82% from other races, and 2.76% from two or more races; 2.77% of the population were Hispanics or Latinos of any race. About 22.0% were German, 10.7% Irish, 9.9% English, 7.6% American, and 6.4% Norwegian ancestry.

Of the 163,611 households, 32.4% had children under 18 living with them, 49.9% were married couples living together, 11.0% had a female householder with no husband present, and 35.2% were not families. About 28.1% of all households were made up of individuals, and 9.6% had someone living alone who was 65 or older. The average household size was 2.46, and the average family size was 3.02.

In the county, the age distribution was 25.7% under 18, 10.6% from 18 to 24, 28.9% from 25 to 44, 22.4% from 45 to 64, and 12.4% who were 65 or older. The median age was 35 years. For every 100 females, there were 96.40 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 93.60 males.

The median income for a household in the county was \$37,308, and for a family was \$46,463. Males had a median income of \$33,097 versus \$25,526 for females. The per capita income for the county was \$19,233. About 8.30% of families and 12.30% of the population were below the poverty line, including 14.20% of those under age 18 and 8.10% of those age 65 or over.

### Law and government [ edit ]

Spokane County is governed by a partisan board of county commissioners, one from each of five districts. They run in a partisan primary election within their own district, then compete countywide in the general election. Other elected officials include the sheriff, auditor (who is also responsible for elections), assessor, treasurer, and prosecutor, which are also partisan offices. Spokane County has an appointed medical examiner. In 2023, Spokane County expanded the number of County Commissioner seats from 3 to 5.<sup>[29]</sup> As of January 2023, the current commissioners for Spokane County are Chris Jordan (Democrat), Amber Waldref (Democrat), Josh Kerns (Republican), Mary Kunej (Republican), and Al French (Republican), from the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth county districts, respectively.<sup>[30]</sup> The previous Sheriff was Ozzie D. Knezovich,<sup>[31]</sup> who was appointed on April 11, 2006, and retired on December 31, 2022.<sup>[32][33]</sup> The current elected Sheriff of Spokane County is John Nowels, whose term began on January 1, 2023.<sup>[34]</sup>

Transportation planning within the county is handled by the Spokane Regional Transportation Council, a metropolitan planning organization that was created in 1962. It distributes federal and state funds for transportation projects and updates the long-range transportation plan for Spokane County.<sup>[35]</sup>

Spokane County is rather conservative for an urban county. It has voted Republican all but three times since 1948. Lyndon Johnson was the last Democrat to win a majority of the county's vote. It gave a plurality of votes to Bill Clinton in both elections. Democratic strength is concentrated in Spokane itself and in Cheney, which is home to Eastern Washington University, while the suburban areas are heavily Republican.<sup>[36]</sup>

The Republican edge has narrowed somewhat since the turn of the century. In the last four elections, the margin has been single digits.

### Communities [ edit ]

- Airway Heights
- Cheney
- Deer Park
- Liberty Lake
- Medical Lake
- Millwood
- Spangle
- Spokane (county seat)
- Spokane Valley

### Towns [ edit ]

- Fairfield
- Latah
- Rockford
- Waverly

### Census-designated places [ edit ]

- Country Homes
- Fairchild Air Force Base
- Fainwood
- Four Lakes
- Mead
- Ois Orchards-East Farms
- Town and Country

### Unincorporated communities [ edit ]

- Amber
- Buckeye
- Chattaroy
- Colbert
- Deep Creek
- Denison
- Duncan
- Dynamite
- Elk
- Espanola
- Freeman
- Garden Springs
- Geiger Heights
- Glenrose
- Greenacres
- Green Bluff
- Hazard
- Highland
- Manito
- Marshall
- Mica
- Milan
- Moab
- Mount Hope
- Nine Mile Lake
- Nine Mile Falls
- Orchard Prairie
- Peone
- Riverside
- Seven Mile
- Silver Lake
- Spokane Bridge
- Spring Valley
- Stringtown
- Tyler
- Valleyford
- Veradale

### Ghost towns/neighborhoods [ edit ]

- Babb
- Coey
- Darkeell
- Dragoon
- Freedom
- Gelb
- Hite
- Lyons
- Mock
- North Pine
- Rahm
- Rodna
- Saxby
- Scribner
- Wallner

### Education [ edit ]

School districts include:<sup>[38]</sup>

- Central Valley School District
- Cheney School District
- Deer Park School District
- East Valley School District (Spokane)
- Freeman School District
- Great Northern School District
- Liberty School District
- Meard School District
- Medical Lake School District
- Newport School District
- Nine Mile Falls School District
- Orchard Prairie School District
- Reardan-Edwall School District
- Riverside School District
- Rosalia School District
- Spokane Public Schools
- St. John School District
- Tekoa School District
- West Valley School District (Spokane)

Community colleges include:

- Spokane Community College
- Spokane Falls Community College

Universities including:

- Eastern Washington University
- Gonzaga University
- Washington State University
- Whitworth University
- University of Washington

### See also [ edit ]

- National Register of Historic Places listings in Spokane County, Washington

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### External links [ edit ]

- Official website

Wikimedia Commons has media related to **Spokane County, Washington**.

<b>Places adjacent to Spokane County, Washington</b>	<span>[</span> show <span>]</span>	
<span>V</span> <span>†</span> <span>†</span> <span>E</span>	<b>Municipalities and communities of Spokane County, Washington, United States</b>	<span>[</span> show <span>]</span>
<span>V</span> <span>†</span> <span>†</span> <span>E</span>	<b>Authority of Washington</b>	<span>[</span> show <span>]</span>
	<b>State of Washington</b>	<span>[</span> show <span>]</span>
	<b>Authority control databases</b>	<span>[</span> show <span>]</span>

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