

PUGET SOUND VITAL SIGNS

INDICATOR PERCENT OF EMPLOYMENT IN NATURAL RESOURCE INDUSTRIES

This indicator compares employment and wages in natural resource industries, including fishing, shellfish aquaculture, agriculture, timber, and recreation and tourism, to the county totals in the region. The original indicator sought to examine the output of natural resource industries in Puget Sound relative to the total economic output. In the absence of GDP data, employment and wage data are presented to show how natural resource industries are supporting jobs and livelihoods in the region.

Indicator Progress



Target Status



Target

No targets are currently set for this indicator.

Data Source

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Economics: National Ocean Watch; Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW); Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) Regional Data: Local Area Personal Income and Employment; Headwaters Economics: Economic Profile System (HW EPS), County Business Patterns, Washington State Department of Natural Resources (WADNR), Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA)

Indicator Lead

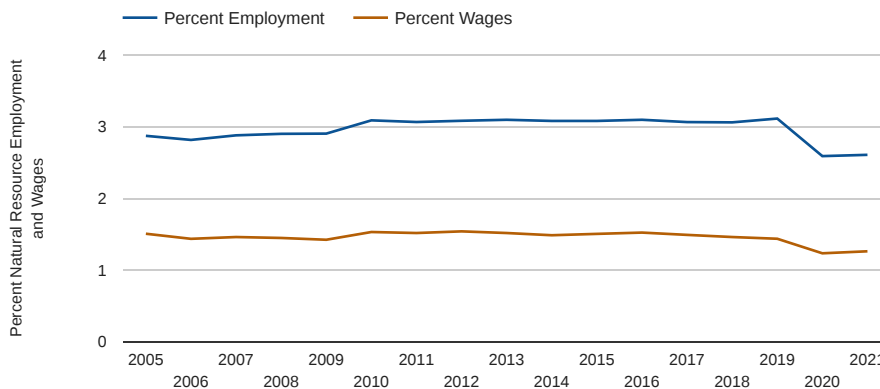
Rabia Ahmed
rahmed@greeneconomics.com
Greene Economics, LLC

Last Updated

05/01/2025

Percent of employment in natural resource industries

By: Percentage of Employment and Wages in Natural Resource Industries



Percentage of employment (number of jobs) and percentage of wages in natural resources-based industries out of all industries across the Puget Sound region. Natural resource industries include: aquaculture, agriculture, timber, fishing, and recreation and tourism.

Key Vital Sign Indicator Results

- Puget Sound natural resource industry employment as a percentage of total employment (across all counties and industries in the Puget Sound region), had remained fairly consistent between 2.9 percent and 3.1 percent until 2019, indicating no trend for the region overall until that year (there was a noticeable increase in this percentage in 2010). However, it decreased sharply in 2020 to 2.6 percent. In 2021, the percentage went up by a little bit, indicating the start of a recovery in the industry.
- Puget Sound natural resource industry wages as a percentage of total wages across all counties and industries in the Puget Sound region was on average 1.45 percent from 2005 to 2009 before slightly increasing to an average of 1.50 percent for 2010 through 2019. This indicator had also remained more or less consistent since 2010 but saw a big decline in 2020 to 1.23 percent, and then a slight recovery to 1.26 percent in 2021.
- Overall, the slight increases for the region between 2010 and 2019 are largely driven by growth in the recreation and tourism sector, but may also be due to industry recovery from the economic recession and growth in the aquaculture industry. Both these sectors also experienced declines in employment during 2020. This decline was primarily due to declines in employment and wages in the recreation and tourism industry as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In comparison, employment in the timber industry has held steady in recent years while fishing employment has been on a downward trend.
- There are differences among counties for natural resource industry employment as a percentage of total employment across all industries, ranging between a little over 1 percent and 3 percent in Thurston, King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties, to almost 13 percent in San Juan County.
- There are similar differences between counties related to natural resource industry wages as a percentage of total wages across all industries, ranging from approximately 1 percent to 2 percent in King, Thurston, Snohomish, and Pierce counties to about 21 percent in San Juan County.
- Natural resource industries tend to be a higher percentage of wage and employment in smaller, more rural counties, and counties that have historically relied on the recreation, timber, and agriculture industries.
- Natural resource industry wages as a percent of total wages in Puget Sound tend to be lower than employment when compared to total employment. This implies that natural resource industry jobs are still lower paying relative to other sectors.
- Reporting employment and wage data instead of GDP data shifts the focus more directly toward people and how these industries support jobs and livelihoods in the Puget Sound region. Obtaining GDP data at the time of this indicator update at the desired scale was not feasible, so the percent of employment and wages in natural resource industries out of all industries was identified as a relevant substitute indicator. It should tell a similar story to GDP data that natural resource industries are a relatively small, but consistent, portion of the overall Puget Sound regional economy and that the contribution of these industries varies by county.

CONTRIBUTING PARTNERS



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE VITAL SIGNS VISIT: vitalsigns.pugetsoundinfo.wa.gov OR CONTACT: vitalsigns@psp.wa.gov