



# Custer County

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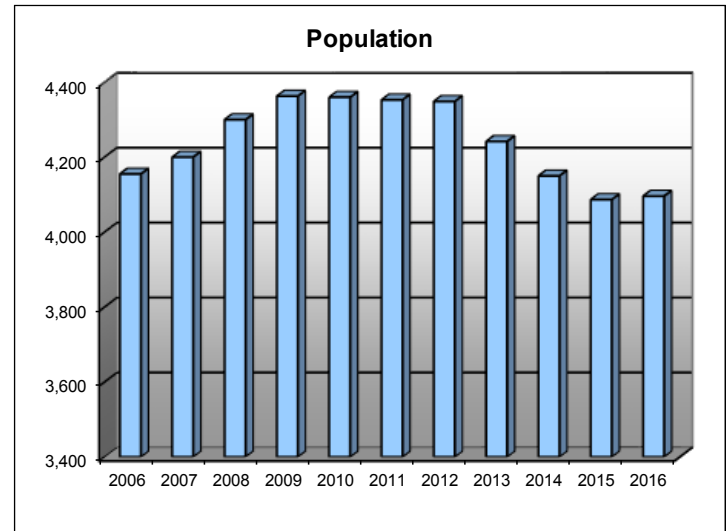
August 2017

## Workforce Trends

### Population

Custer County's 2016 population was 4,096 people. It's largest city, Challis, ID, ranks 81st in the state for population (1,041 people). For each person the county offers more than a square mile of space. It reflects the fortunes of the mining industry. Population decreased in the early 2000s, reaching a low in 2005 after losing over 300 residents as Hecla Mining closed. Population began growing again in 2006 but has declined each year since 2009. Recent stagnation and even small population gains could mean good things for the county.

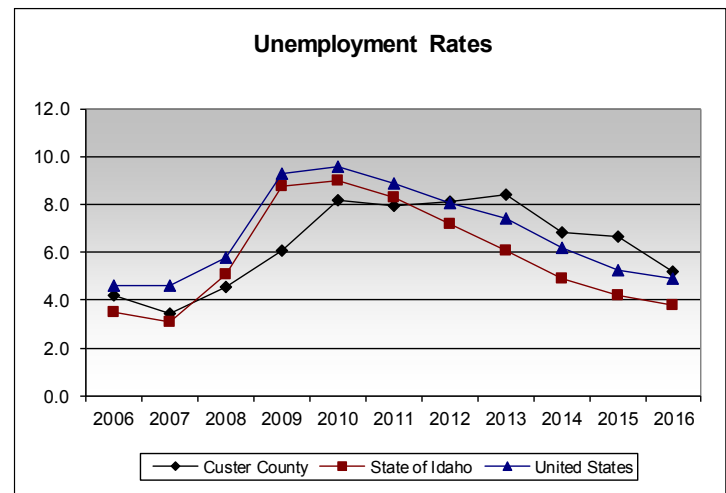
The county has been concentrating on diversifying beyond mining. Economic developers are working hand-in-hand with government officials to attract new business and help existing ones expand to reverse, or at least slow, the decline in the future.



### Labor Force & Employment

Custer County's unemployment rate was higher than the state and nation early in the last decade. In 2003 the rate dipped to match the national rate but has fluctuated since then. The civilian labor force steadily decreased from 2002 to 2007 and has shown little change since. Because the county has limited employers, mergers and changes in management can severely affect the workforce, many of whom travel from other counties. The 2007 unemployment rate was the lowest of the last decade. It rose to over 8 percent between 2010 and 2013, then dropping to 6.9 percent in 2014. The county has seen a significant decrease in annual unemployment rates over the last few years, the 2016 rate was 5.2 percent.

One-third of the county's jobs are in government and natural resources. With only 5 percent of the land in private ownership, the Idaho Department of Fish &



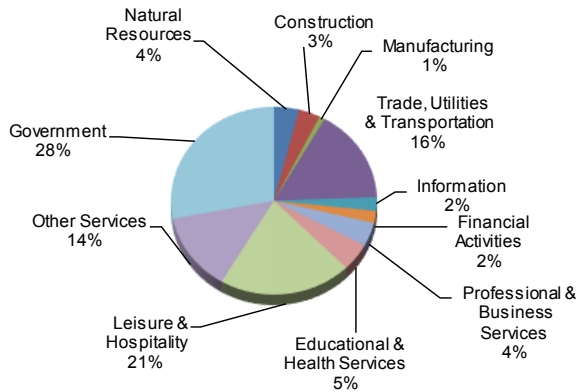
Game and the federal departments of Interior and Agriculture have cadres of employees to maintain the land. They complement employees of school districts and local government.

Trade is still a large industry as is leisure and hospitality because of resources like Redfish Lake, the Sawtooth National Recreation Area and Borah Peak, the highest point in Idaho. Efforts are also underway to change the Boulder White Clouds National Monument into Idaho's first National Park.

Labor Force	July 16	July 17
Civilian Labor Force	2,135	2,045
Total Employment	2,025	1,963
Unemployed	110	82
% of Labor Force Unemployed	5.1	4.0
State of Idaho % Unemployed	3.8	3.0
U.S. % Unemployed	4.9	4.3

Labor Force	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Civilian Labor Force	2,537	2,329	2,438	2,676	2,295	2,300	2,334	2,210	2,140	2,135	2,138
Unemployment	107	80	112	163	188	183	189	186	147	143	112
% of Labor Force Unemployed	4.2	3.4	4.6	6.1	8.2	8.0	8.1	8.4	6.9	6.7	5.2
Employment	2,430	2,249	2,326	2,514	2,107	2,117	2,145	2,024	1,993	1,992	2,027

## Nonfarm Payroll Jobs for 2016



### Covered Employment & Wages

Largely driven by the closures of two mines, and steady decreased in trade, covered employment fell by 7 percent over the decade. At the same time, covered wages increased 7 percent.

Wages for 9 out of 12 industries increased in 2015, while the average wage for total covered employment fell 16 percent. Despite the significant decline in the average wage paid by the mining companies, the industry still offered the highest average wage of \$119,708—more than triple the next highest wage of any industry in the county in 2015.

### Major Employers

Challis & Mackay Joint School Districts #181 & #182
Custer County
Idaho & U.S. Government (BLM, F&G, Ag)
Lamb's Foodtown
The Village Inn
Thompson Creek Mining Co
Village Square

Eastern Idaho Occupational Wages*	Entry Wage	Median Wage
Farmworkers & Laborers	\$8.30	\$9.54
Cashiers	\$8.32	\$9.29
Excavation & Loading Machine & Dragline Operator	\$15.42	\$19.79
Food & Beverage Serving Workers	\$8.29	\$8.77
Industrial Truck/Tractor Operators	\$11.97	\$15.25
Laborers & Material Movers, Hand	\$8.37	\$9.37
Lodging Managers	\$15.93	\$25.72
Maids & Housekeeping Cleaners	\$8.24	\$9.15
Retail Sales Workers	\$8.34	\$10.73

\* Additional occupational wage data can be found on the Idaho Department of Labor website at [lmi.idaho.gov](http://lmi.idaho.gov).

Covered Employment & Average Annual Wages Per Job for 2006, 2015 & 2016	2006		2015		2016	
	Average Employment	Average Wages	Average Employment	Average Wages	Average Employment	Average Wages
<b>Total Covered Wages</b>	1,611	\$32,755	1,423	\$31,636	1,451	\$31,263
<b>Agriculture</b>	44	\$21,349	62	\$24,432	64	\$23,584
<b>Mining</b>	268	\$84,082	62	\$119,708	61	\$99,101
<b>Construction</b>	68	\$20,477	41	\$39,519	47	\$41,669
<b>Manufacturing</b>	6	\$24,609	11	\$36,556	13	\$35,322
<b>Trade, Utilities, &amp; Transportation</b>	247	\$18,868	236	\$25,648	253	\$25,323
<b>Information</b>	22	\$44,651	39	\$43,598	37	\$45,667
<b>Financial Activities</b>	58	\$14,653	32	\$25,660	32	\$23,932
<b>Professional and Business Services</b>	57	\$21,734	67	\$37,423	63	\$38,377
<b>Educational and Health Services</b>	103	\$11,744	87	\$20,259	75	\$23,328
<b>Leisure and Hospitality</b>	211	\$14,460	321	\$18,133	324	\$18,821
<b>Other Services</b>	21	\$29,681	35	\$32,883	41	\$33,589
<b>Government</b>	506	\$30,634	431	\$34,647	440	\$35,674

Per Capita Income	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
<b>Custer County</b>	\$28,886	\$31,713	\$33,783	\$34,611	\$34,071	\$35,964	\$39,542	\$41,047	\$40,372	\$43,399
<b>State of Idaho</b>	\$31,357	\$32,580	\$33,031	\$31,436	\$31,727	\$33,296	\$34,691	\$35,703	\$37,153	\$38,392
<b>United States</b>	\$38,144	\$39,821	\$41,082	\$39,376	\$40,277	\$42,453	\$44,267	\$44,462	\$46,414	\$48,112

Information provided by Bureau Economic Analysis



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[labor.idaho.gov](http://labor.idaho.gov)

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